

Exploring Challenges and Motivational Factors in Task-Based Language Teaching for Speaking Proficiency: Learning-Oriented Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges and motivational factors influencing non-English major students' engagement in task-based language teaching (TBLT) within ESP speaking courses, highlighting the significance of learning-oriented assessment (LOA). While TBLT has been recognized for promoting communicative competence, learner autonomy, and classroom interaction, understanding students' personal experiences and the role of assessment strategies remains crucial for enhancing learning outcomes. The research aims to examine how students utilize LOA strategies such as feedback, peer collaboration, and self-reflection to overcome language learning challenges and sustain motivation. Adopting a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 25 undergraduate students enrolled in ESP courses at an Indonesian university. Thematic analysis supported by NVivo software was used for data interpretation. Results indicate students face linguistic, emotional, and cognitive challenges, but engagement with LOA practices helps foster confidence and improves speaking performance. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating formative assessment practices tailored to learners' needs within TBLT to promote motivation and effective language development. These insights provide valuable implications for designing student-centered ESP instruction that actively supports learners' communicative and motivational growth.

Keywords: Learning-Oriented Assessment, Motivational Factors, Speaking Proficiency, Task-Based Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become a prominent approach in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction, especially in contexts where communicative competence is prioritized over grammatical accuracy (Burgos et al., 2024). TBLT emphasizes real-world, purposeful tasks that encourage learners to use English meaningfully in scenarios that mirror their future academic or professional environments (Chen, 2023). In ESP speaking classes, this approach fosters learner engagement, collaboration, and fluency—features that are particularly relevant for non-English major students preparing for field-specific communication demands (Tavassoli & Sorat, 2023). Despite these benefits, students often encounter challenges such as anxiety, low confidence, and difficulties in adjusting to the communicative nature of task-based activities (Ghiasvand &

Banitalebi, 2023). However, the presence of supportive classroom environments—characterized by peer collaboration, constructive teacher feedback, and a culture of participation—can enhance student engagement and performance. This reflects the value of incorporating learning-oriented assessment (LOA) into TBLT, where feedback, self-reflection, and peer interaction are embedded within instruction to promote learning and motivation.

Research on TBLT in ESP settings has highlighted its contributions to language acquisition, classroom interaction, and learner autonomy (Al-Aayedi et al., 2025; Karlinda & Srivastava, 2025; Salim et al., 2025). These studies have explored aspects such as task design, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes, showing how TBLT supports communicative competence. However, there has been increasing interest in how students themselves experience these instructional approaches, particularly in terms of how they respond to challenges, manage speaking tasks, and make use of classroom support. Non-English major students in ESP classes bring diverse academic backgrounds and learning experiences, which influence how they engage with task-based speaking activities. Their reflections, actions, and emotions during these tasks are important to understand, especially when assessment is viewed not as a final measure, but as an integrated part of the learning process. In this context, LOA serves as a valuable framework for interpreting how students monitor their progress, respond to feedback, and take ownership of their learning.

This study aims to explore students' perspectives within TBLT-based ESP speaking instruction, focusing on the challenges they face, the strategies and support systems they use, and the factors that influence their motivation. It examines how learners engage with speaking tasks by drawing on personal, social, and instructional resources—particularly through the lens of LOA, which emphasizes assessment as a formative and learning-driven process. By centering student experiences, the study offers insight into how classroom interaction, learner beliefs, and feedback practices intersect to shape engagement and progress. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how TBLT and LOA can be meaningfully aligned to support students' communicative development, providing practical implications for designing instruction that is both pedagogically sound and responsive to learners' needs in ESP contexts.

1. Guided by these purposes, this study explores the following research questions:
2. What assessment-related challenges do non-English major students face during TBLT in ESP speaking classes?
3. How do students utilize LOA strategies—such as feedback, peer collaboration, and self-reflection—to overcome challenges in TBLT-based ESP speaking classes?
4. How do students' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with LOA influence their motivation to engage in English speaking tasks within the TBLT framework?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementing TBLT poses several challenges that prevent its seamless integration into language classrooms. Although TBLT promotes meaningful interaction and real-world communication, many educators struggle due to insufficient training and unfamiliarity with task-based methods. Novice teachers, in particular, often lack the confidence to apply TBLT principles, which differ sharply from traditional grammar-focused instruction (Chen, 2023; Suadi & Mensah, 2025). This gap between theory and practice is deepened by teacher education programs that underemphasize TBLT, leaving instructors ill-prepared for classrooms still driven by conventional methods (Qin & Lei, 2022). Additionally, overcrowded classrooms and limited resources push teachers to revert to rote learning, hampering individualized guidance essential for successful task completion (Hoa & Túng, 2023). Apsari et al. (2022) note that such constraints often force teacher-centered instruction, which contradicts TBLT's interactive goals.

Assessment practices represent another significant hurdle in TBLT implementation. Traditional, product-oriented assessments are misaligned with TBLT's communicative focus. LOA offers a solution by emphasizing formative support through feedback and peer evaluation, fostering reflection and continuous improvement during task execution. However, many teachers lack familiarity with LOA strategies, especially in resource-limited or exam-driven environments, limiting their ability to adopt such practices effectively. This lack of assessment literacy can stifle the developmental benefits that TBLT aims to deliver through student-centered, communicative engagement.

Contextual and institutional influences also hinder TBLT, particularly in exam-oriented education systems like Vietnam. The emphasis on standardized testing discourages communicative practices in favor of grammar memorization and test preparation (Hoa & Túng, 2023; Sumarsono et al., 2020). Educators are often pressured to teach to the test, reducing opportunities for authentic language use. Assessment methods remain outdated, focusing on discrete language components rather than communicative proficiency, which misrepresents students' real progress (Fernández, 2021; Gywali, 2023). LOA provides an alternative that aligns with TBLT by allowing

continuous tracking of learner development through realistic communication tasks, integrating formative feedback and revision opportunities that enhance learning outcomes.

Cultural beliefs and educator attitudes toward language learning further influence how TBLT is received. Misconceptions about the approach and a prioritization of accuracy over fluency can lead to resistance or superficial implementation (Guan, 2023). Professional development is key to overcoming this challenge. Training programs should focus on TBLT principles and LOA, while promoting collaboration among educators to share strategies and tools (Chen et al., 2023; Cuesta & Fernández, 2022). Moreover, reforming assessment to value communicative success rather than only linguistic precision can help legitimize TBLT in various educational contexts (Jahan & Shakir, 2022). The integration of digital technologies also holds promise, enabling teachers to design authentic, interactive tasks and extend learning beyond the classroom (Neupane, 2024). While implementation is complex, continued research and institutional support are crucial to fully realize TBLT's potential.

Learner motivation plays a major role in task participation and success in TBLT contexts. Motivation can be intrinsic, driven by enjoyment or interest, or extrinsic, driven by rewards or obligations. Intrinsically motivated learners often engage more deeply and persist longer (Qiu, 2024; Yue et al., 2022). Personal interest, emotional satisfaction, or cultural connections enhance this engagement (Anis & Anwar, 2020). Although extrinsic motivators like grades or job prospects can be effective short-term, they may not sustain long-term commitment (Rezaei & Salehi, 2022; Shoeib, 2022). Understanding the impact of learners' goal orientation is vital for designing meaningful and engaging tasks.

Lastly, environmental and social factors significantly influence learner engagement in TBLT. Support from peers, family, and teachers enhances motivation, while collaborative learning promotes interaction and enjoyment (Al-Dalawi et al., 2023; Tahang et al., 2023). Instructional strategies such as gamification and project-based learning can create a positive environment that nurtures both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Burgos et al., 2024; Xie, 2023). Cultural relevance also fosters commitment, as learners seeking cultural integration are more engaged (Zhao, 2024). LOA further supports motivation by offering personalized feedback and autonomy. Technological tools like mobile-assisted language learning expand flexibility and promote authentic communication (Zeng & Fisher, 2023). However, challenges like anxiety can reduce participation, underscoring the need for supportive teaching practices that create safe, engaging environments (Gurdal & Acar, 2024).

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted a phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences of non-English major students as they participated in TBLT within ESP speaking classes. The phenomenological approach was selected to examine how students experienced challenges, developed coping strategies, and responded to both internal and external influences during task-based learning. The design allowed the researchers to focus on how students interpreted their own learning journey, particularly regarding their efforts to improve speaking skills in a context closely related to their academic disciplines in the arts. This exploration is situated within a LOA perspective, where students' reflections, feedback experiences, and classroom interactions are viewed as integral parts of their learning process, not separate from assessment but deeply connected to it.

Participants

The study involved 25 undergraduate students from a public university in Indonesia. All participants were enrolled in an ESP speaking course designed for students majoring in fine arts, music, dance, or performing arts. None of the students majored in English, although all had completed at least one general English course before taking the ESP class. The sample included 14 female and 11 male students, aged between 19 and 22 years. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had meaningful engagement with the course and experience with TBLT-based speaking tasks. All had attended classes regularly and actively participated in multiple speaking assignments throughout the semester. Given the study's focus on how students engage with feedback, self-monitor progress, and utilize classroom support mechanisms, the selected participants provided a relevant sample for understanding learning experiences through the lens of LOA.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured interview guide designed to align with the three research questions. It consisted of 17 open-ended questions divided into four thematic areas: (1) challenges in ESP speaking tasks, (2) strategies for overcoming these challenges, (3) external support such as peer and teacher assistance, and (4) internal factors including attitudes, beliefs, and prior experiences. Example questions included:

(1) What challenges have you faced while doing the speaking tasks in your ESP class? (2) What strategies did you use to overcome these challenges? (3) Did your teacher or classmates support you in managing these challenges? How? (4) How do your attitudes toward English speaking affect your motivation to participate in the speaking tasks? (5) What beliefs do you hold about the importance or usefulness of speaking English that encourage you to engage? and (6) Can you share experiences during the course that have influenced your motivation to speak English? The instrument was reviewed by two ESP experts for clarity and content validity. A pilot interview was also conducted with two students to ensure the questions were clear and relevant. Several of the questions directly tapped into LOA principles, such as learners' use of feedback, peer support, and self-evaluation—core components of how assessment fosters learning during and after task performance.

Data Collection

Data were collected over four weeks during the academic semester. All interviews were conducted face-to-face (offline) in a quiet room on the university campus to ensure comfort and minimize distractions. Before the interviews, participants received an explanation of the study's purpose and provided written informed consent. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The researchers used the structured interview guide throughout while also encouraging elaboration when participants wished to share additional insights. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express themselves clearly. All sessions were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then reviewed against the recordings to ensure accuracy. Through this data collection approach, participants were encouraged to articulate how they responded to challenges during task-based speaking activities, including how they engaged with assessment-for-learning processes such as classroom feedback, peer interaction, and reflective learning—all essential in an LOA framework.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, supported by NVivo 12 software to assist in organizing and coding the transcripts. An inductive coding approach was used, where themes emerged from the participants' own words rather than from pre-existing categories. The researchers carefully read and re-read each transcript, coded key expressions and patterns, and grouped them into broader thematic categories. These included types of challenges, emotional reactions, support from peers and teachers, motivation, and speaking task experiences. To ensure consistency and trustworthiness, a portion of the data was re-coded and reviewed independently. This process contributed to the credibility and dependability of the final thematic interpretations. The use of inductive coding allowed the researchers to uncover how students experienced the learning function of assessment—particularly how feedback, support, and self-reflection were perceived as enabling or limiting factors during their speaking development in TBLT-based ESP classes. These elements are central to LOA, which values student insight and learning progression as revealed through lived experience.

FINDINGS

The analysis of Table 1 reveals lexical patterns that illustrate how students experience ESP speaking classes through the lens of LOA. High-frequency words such as “speaking,” “English,” “confidence,” and “practice” highlight students' emphasis on oral communication as both a primary objective and a personal challenge, especially within arts-related disciplines. These patterns reflect LOA's emphasis on integrating assessment into ongoing learning processes. Students' frequent mention of practice and growing confidence suggests that low-stakes, continuous opportunities to speak enable them to track progress, embrace mistakes, and view assessment as part of their development rather than as a punitive measure.

Additionally, words like “helps,” “motivate,” “think,” and “better” signal students' engagement in reflection and self-regulation—core elements of LOA. Their recognition of constructive teacher feedback, peer collaboration, and classroom support points to a shift in how they perceive assessment: not as judgment, but as guidance for improvement. References to “express,” “useful,” and “field” also show students connecting classroom tasks to real-life, professional contexts, reinforcing LOA's goal of fostering learner agency and meaningful engagement. Although terms like “nervous” and “mistakes” reveal ongoing anxiety, the increasing presence of positive language—such as “boost,” “mindset,” and “trying”—suggests that embedding assessment within task-based learning can effectively support both emotional resilience and long-term communicative growth.

Table 1. Word Frequency Query Results.

Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
speaking	138	English	93	Think	56	helps	55
Motivate	47	Learning	40	practice	40	confidence	37

Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count	Word	Count
Feels	37	Class	34	teacher	32	better	29
Trying	29	Started	26	Tasks	26	positive	25
Small	23	Enjoy	22	Classmates	21	seeing	21
Words	21	Experiences	19	Focus	19	friends	19
Saying	19	Believe	18	careful	18	moment	18
changed	17	feedback	17	Quiet	17	topic	17
excited	16	Listen	16	Participate	16	people	16
someone	16	Thought	16	perfect	15	point	15
Sometimes	15	Affect	14	express	14	group	14
Keeps	14	sentence	14	Challenges	13	chances	13
Others	13	Outside	13	useful	13	boost	12
mistakes	12	supportive	12	Thing	12	asked	11
Field	11	Laugh	11	mindset	11	nervous	11

Assessment-Related Challenges Non-English Major Students Face during TBLT in ESP Speaking Classes

Based on the interview data, non-English major students encounter a variety of assessment-related linguistic challenges during TBLT in ESP speaking classes. Chief among these are limited vocabulary, grammatical insecurity, and poor fluency under pressure, all of which directly affect their ability to perform in speaking assessments. Students often reported being unable to access appropriate words or construct accurate sentences when assessed, especially in real-time speaking tasks.

“Honestly, I always get stuck trying to find the right words. Like, I know what I wanna say, but my brain freezes.”

“I have a small vocabulary, so I end up repeating the same basic words again and again.”

“The biggest problem for me is grammar. I overthink every sentence and then I mess up more.”

These challenges are exacerbated in assessment settings where students feel scrutinized and are expected to perform with accuracy and fluency. Their prior English learning experiences—often focused more on passive skills like reading and writing—leave them underprepared for the spontaneous demands of spoken assessments, contributing to a persistent gap between knowledge and performance.

In addition to linguistic struggles, students face psychological and emotional challenges that heavily interfere with their performance during speaking assessments. Feelings of anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence were recurrent themes, particularly when assessments involved speaking in front of peers or being evaluated individually. These emotions often led to task avoidance, silence, or a reduced willingness to participate.

“I get super nervous when I have to speak in front of the whole class. My voice literally shakes.”

“Group speaking tasks stress me out ‘cause I compare myself to others who speak better.”

“My confidence was super low. Like, even when I had something to say, I’d hold it in.”

Assessment situations, which often lack psychological safety, reinforce a perfectionist mindset among students—one where the fear of judgment outweighs the drive to communicate. This mindset prevents risk-taking and reduces opportunities for authentic language use, thereby undermining the objectives of communicative assessment in TBLT.

Students also described cognitive challenges that arise during assessed speaking tasks, particularly the difficulty of processing English spontaneously and the mental burden of translating from their first language. These cognitive demands are especially overwhelming in timed or impromptu assessment situations, where there is little room to pause or reflect.

“One thing that really gets me is thinking in English. I keep translating from Bahasa in my head, and it slows me down.”

“I’m always second-guessing my sentence structure, so I end up stopping mid-sentence.”

This ongoing self-monitoring and translation process impedes fluency and creates a mental bottleneck that is further intensified under assessment conditions. Rather than focusing on communication, students become preoccupied with accuracy and form, leading to halting speech or complete disengagement. As a result, their true communicative abilities are often masked by cognitive overload.

Moreover, instructional and task-related factors contribute significantly to students’ assessment-related struggles. When speaking tasks are poorly explained or based on unfamiliar topics, students report feeling confused, unprepared, and unable to perform effectively. This lack of clarity inhibits their ability to organize ideas or apply relevant language skills during the assessment.

“I don’t always understand the task instructions, which makes it harder to prepare.”

“When the topic’s unfamiliar, I just don’t know what to say. It makes me feel kinda stuck.”

Furthermore, the spontaneous nature of some assessments, especially when students are called on without warning, increases pressure and reduces cognitive readiness.

“I freeze when the teacher calls on me suddenly. Like, my brain goes full blank mode.” These challenges suggest that the structure and timing of assessment tasks must be carefully designed to ensure students are given the cognitive space and instructional clarity necessary to succeed.

Lastly, social and environmental factors also shape students’ experiences of speaking assessments in TBLT contexts. Many participants noted that silence in the classroom, lack of peer interaction, and the fear of being judged heightened their discomfort during assessments. The absence of supportive classroom dynamics often made speaking feel more like a performance than a communicative act.

“The room gets super quiet during tasks and that makes me more self-conscious.”

“Sometimes I forget everything I planned to say. Like, boom—it’s gone the second I open my mouth.”

“I don’t have anyone to practice with outside class, so I feel behind sometimes.”

Such conditions not only discourage participation but also widen the gap between everyday classroom speaking and the higher-pressure context of assessments. Without an emotionally and socially supportive environment, speaking assessments can unintentionally penalize students for factors unrelated to their language competence.

The data reveal that non-English major students face a network of interrelated assessment-related challenges during TBLT in ESP speaking classes. These include linguistic limitations, emotional and cognitive overload, instructional confusion, and social discomfort—all of which hinder their ability to demonstrate spoken proficiency during assessments. The findings underscore the need for assessment practices that are psychologically safe, pedagogically transparent, and socially engaging. Without addressing these underlying issues, assessment in TBLT risks becoming a barrier rather than a tool for language development.

Strategies Used by Students to Overcome Challenges in TBLT-Based ESP Speaking Classes

In relation to the second research question, the interview data reveal that non-English major students actively employed a range of self-reflective practices to manage and overcome speaking-related difficulties. Self-observation and rehearsal were common strategies that enabled students to gain awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement. These actions reflect a form of self-assessment that supports language development through ongoing reflection and adjustment. As one student shared,

“I practiced in front of the mirror and acted like I was giving a speech.”

Another explained,

“I recorded myself speaking and listened to it later. It showed me what to fix.”

Similarly, the use of mental rehearsal allowed students to prepare internally before speaking tasks:

“I’d mentally rehearse what I wanted to say before class even started.”

These reflective strategies empowered students to reduce anxiety, improve fluency, and take greater control over their learning process—hallmarks of a LOA mindset.

Peer collaboration also emerged as a vital learning-oriented strategy, offering students emotional support, practical guidance, and opportunities for informal feedback. By engaging with classmates in low-stakes environments, students created shared spaces where they could practice speaking without the fear of formal judgment. This type of collaborative learning facilitated risk-taking and experimentation with language. One student reported,

“I started practicing with a friend outside class. It helped me feel more relaxed.”

Others highlighted the importance of study groups and peer planning:

“I joined a small study group where we all practiced together in a chill way.”

“My classmate would help me plan what to say before we started. That gave me more confidence.”

These examples show how informal peer interactions functioned as formative assessment opportunities, where students received encouragement, shared feedback, and developed speaking confidence through cooperative engagement.

In addition, students demonstrated learning-oriented thinking by consciously adjusting their expectations and adopting strategies that emphasized communication over perfection. This included simplifying vocabulary, using filler expressions to maintain fluency, and rethinking their goals during speaking tasks. Rather than focusing on error-free performance, students began prioritizing clarity and message delivery. As one learner stated,

“I used simple vocabulary that I felt confident with instead of complicated stuff.”

Another added,

“Instead of panicking, I started using filler words to buy time, like ‘uh’ or ‘you know.’”

And a third commented,

“I stopped aiming for perfection and just focused on getting my point across.”

These strategic adaptations demonstrate a shift toward learning-focused assessment values, where the process of communication is valued more than rigid linguistic accuracy. In doing so, students built resilience and found ways to persist through speaking challenges.

Equally important was the role of internal reflection and self-regulation in helping students maintain motivation and manage anxiety during assessments. Several students described setting small personal goals, monitoring their progress, and accepting mistakes as part of their learning journey. These self-reflective behaviors aligned with formative assessment principles that view learning as a continuous process. One student noted,

“I set small goals like, ‘Today I’ll say one full sentence.’ Then I built from there.”

Another expressed a more accepting attitude toward imperfection:

“I made peace with making mistakes. That mindset helped me try more.”

Others found strength in reflecting on their personal growth:

“When I remember my progress, I feel less scared and more ready to try again.”

Such reflections enabled students to reframe failure as an opportunity for improvement, further reinforcing the developmental nature of assessment within TBLT contexts.

Students in TBLT-based ESP speaking classes utilized a combination of self-reflection, peer collaboration, and positive feedback orientation as LOA strategies to overcome their challenges. These strategies allowed them to prepare more effectively, communicate with greater confidence, and develop a healthier relationship with spoken assessment. By prioritizing process over product and embracing the role of reflection and peer input, students took an active role in their speaking development. These findings suggest that integrating structured opportunities for feedback, collaborative learning, and self-assessment into TBLT design can significantly enhance learner autonomy and resilience in ESP classrooms.

The Influence of Students’ Attitudes, Beliefs, and Experiences with LOA on their Motivation to Engage in English Speaking Tasks within the TBLT Framework

Based on the interview data, students’ attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with LOA significantly influence their motivation to engage in English speaking tasks within the TBLT framework. Students who saw speaking as a skill that develops over time—rather than a fixed ability—were more motivated to participate in speaking tasks, even when nervous or uncertain. This reflects a learning-oriented mindset where progress is valued over perfection. As one student shared,

“Now I see it as a skill I can improve. That makes me wanna participate more.”

Another echoed this belief by linking task value to perceived usefulness:

“When I believe speaking is useful, I actually care about the tasks and put effort in.”

These perspectives align with the core principles of LOA, which emphasize formative feedback, growth, and learner agency. Conversely, negative self-perceptions—such as fear of being judged or feeling incapable—often led to disengagement, suggesting that without supportive assessment practices, students may struggle to sustain motivation.

Students’ beliefs about the instrumental value of English speaking also played a powerful motivational role within LOA contexts. When learners viewed speaking tasks as meaningful steps toward future goals—such as international careers, travel, or collaboration—they were more invested in the classroom process. These beliefs encouraged students to treat feedback, peer interaction, and task performance as part of a developmental trajectory rather than isolated evaluations. One student explained,

“If I wanna go international with my art, I have to speak English well, no doubt.”

Another stated,

“I believe speaking English opens up more chances, like jobs or traveling abroad.”

Such beliefs foster a forward-looking orientation in which assessment becomes a tool for preparation, not just a judgment of current ability. Within this framework, students are more receptive to constructive feedback and more engaged in reflective practices that promote improvement—both of which are essential components of LOA.

Additionally, students’ emotional experiences and classroom interactions shaped their attitudes toward assessment and influenced their motivation to speak. Learners from rigid or punitive educational backgrounds expressed anxiety and hesitation, often linked to past experiences where errors were penalized. For example, one student recalled,

“My school focused a lot on grammar, so when I had to speak, I didn’t know how to be natural.”

Another noted,

“My background made me shy about making mistakes ‘cause we were taught to be perfect.”

However, when classroom environments emphasized formative feedback and emotional support, students began to shift their beliefs and increase participation. One student reflected,

“The first time I spoke in class and people actually understood me—it felt amazing.”

And another shared,

“When I got positive feedback from my teacher, it made me want to keep improving.”

The findings demonstrate that students’ motivation to engage in English speaking tasks within the TBLT framework is deeply shaped by their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with LOA. When students view speaking as a skill that can be improved, and when assessment is framed as a supportive, formative process, they are more likely to participate actively, embrace challenges, and respond positively to feedback. Beliefs about the real-world value of English further strengthen this motivation, particularly when students perceive tasks as relevant to their academic or professional futures. Importantly, emotionally safe classroom environments—where peer collaboration and constructive teacher feedback are emphasized—help shift students away from fear-driven mindsets toward growth-oriented perspectives. Therefore, to foster meaningful engagement, educators should embed LOA principles into TBLT practices by prioritizing formative feedback, encouraging self-reflection, and creating supportive social dynamics that empower students to take risks, learn from mistakes, and develop long-term confidence in their speaking abilities.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights that non-English major students in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)-based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) speaking classes face a complex set of interconnected assessment-related challenges. These include linguistic limitations, emotional strain, cognitive overload, instructional confusion, and social discomfort. Together, these obstacles suggest that current assessment practices within TBLT frameworks often fall short in providing the formative, motivational, and culturally responsive support needed for effective language development. This issue is especially pertinent in the Indonesian context, where teachers’ perceptions of local English varieties differ markedly between urban and rural schools. Variations in institutional support and teacher beliefs influence whether diverse English forms and inclusive assessment practices are recognized or marginalized.

The findings correspond with broader research on TBLT implementation, which identifies lack of teacher preparedness, misalignment between pedagogical goals and assessment practices, and institutional resistance as major barriers (Apsari et al., 2022; Chen, 2023; Suadi & Mensah, 2025). Teachers unfamiliar with task-based methods tend to default to traditional, grammar-focused instruction that conflicts with TBLT’s communicative aims, particularly in resource-limited settings (Hoa & Tũng, 2023). As Fernández (2021) and Gywali (2023) emphasize, outdated assessment models that prioritize linguistic accuracy still dominate, undermining comprehensive evaluations of speaking proficiency. This gap between intended learning outcomes and actual assessment practices contributes to increased anxiety and reduced learner confidence, especially when formative feedback loops—a core principle of Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA)—are missing. Without sufficient professional development and institutional support, teachers may unintentionally perpetuate practices that widen achievement gaps, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Cultural norms and entrenched beliefs about language correctness and standards heavily shape how assessment is interpreted and implemented (Guan, 2023; Sumarsono et al., 2020). In many Indonesian classrooms, prioritizing “standard” English over local varieties leads to social pressure on students who speak with localized accents or features, a challenge more acute in rural schools with limited exposure to diverse English varieties. The spontaneous communication focus of TBLT conflicts with classroom cultures emphasizing error avoidance rather than communicative success. This problem is worsened by superficial TBLT adoption where tasks exist without meaningful assessment strategies that reflect real-world interaction (Suadi & Mensah, 2025).

Addressing these challenges requires adopting LOA frameworks that emphasize formative feedback, learner autonomy, and reflective teaching. LOA aligns with motivational principles shown to enhance engagement, such as learner autonomy, task relevance, and cultural inclusion (Qiu, 2024; Zhao, 2024). Research shows that environments rich in feedback and inclusive, task-based assessment can significantly boost learner confidence and willingness to participate, particularly when tasks acknowledge linguistic and cultural diversity (Kiss & Pack, 2023; Yue et al., 2022). In contrast, rigid summative assessments diminish these motivational effects. Targeted professional development focused on LOA and awareness of linguistic diversity is especially crucial for rural Indonesian teachers, who often lack access to updated resources and networks. Embracing LOA not only improves speaking outcomes but also promotes equitable recognition of local English varieties, supporting a more inclusive and effective TBLT implementation.

Importantly, this study finds that students actively use LOA strategies such as self-reflection, peer collaboration, and feedback engagement to overcome speaking challenges. When formative assessment is embedded in meaningful tasks, learners develop greater confidence, autonomy, and resilience, resulting in better speaking skills. These findings suggest Indonesian English teachers, especially in varied school contexts, should reconsider rigid assessment standards and embrace flexibility that supports learner agency grounded in local realities.

This student-centered approach aligns with literature advocating formative, feedback-rich environments within TBLT (Chen, 2023; Suadi & Mensah, 2025). LOA principles foster task engagement and meet motivational needs through self-regulated learning (Qiu, 2024; Yue et al., 2022). However, many teachers struggle with LOA implementation due to insufficient training and institutional constraints, particularly in under-resourced schools (Apsari et al., 2022; Qin & Lei, 2022). The students' strategic use of assessment in this study demonstrates the potential when classrooms support reflection and collaboration. Yet, persistent summative, grammar-based evaluations limit learner autonomy and reveal a gap between TBLT theory and classroom realities, especially in teacher-centered environments (Fernández, 2021; Gywali, 2023; Hoa & Túng, 2023).

Culturally and institutionally, students' positive engagement with LOA challenges dominant norms that emphasize linguistic purity over communicative effectiveness. Guan (2023) notes that teacher beliefs often reinforce accuracy-driven instruction where high-stakes exams dominate, marginalizing local English varieties—especially in rural schools with limited professional development and exposure to global Englishes. Encouraging student reflection, collaboration, and engagement with feedback calls for teachers to adopt more open attitudes toward non-standard English forms and learner-led progress, confronting linguistic uniformity and rigid norms (Sumarsono et al., 2020). Teachers' attitudes toward assessment and language variation, particularly across rural and urban settings, are therefore crucial to equitable TBLT implementation.

Motivation plays a vital role in sustaining engagement with TBLT tasks, particularly when learning-oriented strategies are present. Peer collaboration, goal setting, and feedback enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Al-Dalawi et al., 2023; Anis & Anwar, 2020; Kiss & Pack, 2023). These strategies build learner confidence and reduce anxiety, a key barrier to language performance (Gurdal & Acar, 2024). When learners feel ownership of their language development, they are more willing to engage regardless of linguistic background. However, realizing these benefits widely requires teacher support in designing inclusive, feedback-driven instruction and assessment aligned with communicative goals (Jahan & Shakir, 2022; Neupane, 2024). Ultimately, LOA empowers learners and encourages educators to rethink fixed ideas about language standards and assessment across Indonesia's diverse school contexts.

The study also reveals that students' motivation to participate in English speaking tasks within TBLT is strongly influenced by their attitudes and experiences with LOA, particularly when it fosters a supportive, formative, and emotionally safe environment. Motivation arises not only from instructional design but also from learners' perceptions of feedback, peer collaboration, and task relevance to their future goals. Emphasizing a growth mindset and real-world applicability aligns with views that intrinsic and integrative motivations are central to engagement (Anis & Anwar, 2020; Qiu, 2024; Zhao, 2024). Constructive teacher feedback and peer interaction underscore the affective dimension of TBLT motivation (Al-Dalawi et al., 2023; Tahang et al., 2023), while emotional safety fosters risk-taking and confidence, essential for language learning (Gurdal & Acar, 2024). LOA's promotion of learner autonomy through ongoing formative feedback and self-reflection further confirms the value of embedded assessment practices (Zeng & Fisher, 2023; Kiss & Pack, 2023).

These findings reinforce calls within the literature to integrate LOA into TBLT as a remedy to traditional summative assessments that often hinder communicative development (Fernández, 2021; Gywali, 2023). Embedding assessment in task-based instruction creates formative learning opportunities that support language development and enhance task relevance, echoing pedagogical recommendations (Cuesta & Fernández, 2022; Jahan & Shakir, 2022). However, the motivational potential of LOA faces challenges in under-resourced, exam-oriented settings like those described by Hoa and Túng (2023), where standardized testing pressures and teacher-centered pedagogy limit authentic task engagement. These tensions highlight persistent issues of inadequate teacher preparation for TBLT and LOA (Chen, 2023; Qin & Lei, 2022; Suadi & Mensah, 2025), underscoring the need for stronger institutional support and professional development.

Finally, the study suggests that teachers' perceptions of local English varieties and their implementation of LOA within TBLT are mediated by school location—urban or rural. Urban teachers, typically with better access to professional development and global pedagogical trends, tend to adopt formative, motivational assessment practices more effectively than rural teachers, who often face rigid exam-driven systems and resource limitations (Apsari et al., 2022; Guan, 2023). These disparities affect how local English varieties are validated, with urban teachers more likely to view them as legitimate communicative tools, while rural teachers emphasize standard norms tied to high-stakes exams. While LOA-informed TBLT shows motivational promise, the findings emphasize the need for context-sensitive professional development that respects Indonesia's sociolinguistic realities, encourages teacher validation of diverse language forms, and supports inclusive, learner-centered assessment across all school settings.

CONCLUSION

This study found that non-English major students in TBLT-based ESP speaking classes face interconnected challenges—such as linguistic difficulties, emotional stress, instructional confusion, and social discomfort—that hinder their speaking performance during assessments. However, through LOA strategies like self-reflection, peer collaboration, and feedback, students developed greater confidence, autonomy, and motivation. These strategies helped shift their view of assessment from a stressful requirement to a supportive learning process. Students were more engaged when assessments felt relevant, formative, and safe, highlighting the importance of integrating LOA into TBLT to foster learner growth and participation. To maximize impact, educators should prioritize feedback, reflection, and peer support while creating emotionally supportive classroom environments. Given the study's limited scope, future research should examine LOA-informed TBLT across diverse disciplines and institutions.

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