

# The Effect of Task-based Language Teaching on Speaking Skill

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**Abstract**—The goal of task-based language teaching (TBLT) is to assist learners in acquiring a subconscious understanding of the language, allowing them to engage effortlessly and spontaneously in communication. The present study aimed to investigate the students' attitudes toward the impact of group oral presentations on the improvement of their speaking skills. Specifically, it employed a task-based approach to teach technical English to 2<sup>nd</sup>-year architectural engineering students at Cihan University-Erbil. Data for this study were collected through the use of a survey questionnaire. The students' feedback revealed a positive attitude towards group oral presentations and their active participation in speaking activities. However, the teachers' observations indicated that there was no notable improvement in the students' pronunciation skills. They were unable to enhance the grammatical precision of their presentation either. In general, this approach motivated them to take part in speaking activities more.

**Keywords**—Speaking skill, Task-based language teaching, Group oral presentation, EFL speaking skills.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) aims to help learners in attaining an intuitive grasp of the language, enabling them to communicate spontaneously. Rather than being explicitly instructed, learners acquire knowledge of the structure and usage of the target language through practical tasks. Ellis (2003) states that Task-based learning offers the benefit of enabling students to utilize their existing skills, promoting language development through its application. In addition, it shifts students' attention toward accomplishing a specific objective, where language serves as a tool and its usage becomes essential.

For students to be able to speak effectively, they must possess both sufficient linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic or background knowledge. However, simply having knowledge is not enough for effective communication unless students engage in various types of speaking activities. A task can be defined as an activity that requires students to process given information in order to achieve a desired outcome, while allowing teachers to oversee and guide the process (Prabhu, 2004). A distinguishing feature of a task is that students utilize their existing language resources to accomplish it. From the perspective of task-based learning (TBL), tasks serve as a means to provide focus and context for learning, motivating students to employ language skills while completing the assigned tasks (Ellis, 2003).

Nunan (2003) emphasizes the shift from traditional, repetitive language drills to communicative language teaching that prioritizes interaction. Key ideas include the importance of both fluency and accuracy in language learning, the need for learners to engage in meaningful communication through activities like role-plays and simulations, and the significance of understanding the linguistic elements involved in speaking. Nunan (ibid) advocates for teaching methods that offer a balance between structured language practice and spontaneous, interactive speaking opportunities to enhance learners' speaking skills effectively.

Collaborative tasks among students promote more communication and socialization which are essential for enhancing their academic progress and success. Hung and Mai (2020) conducted research on the viewpoints of teachers in Vietnam regarding the use of group work in their classes and found that they acknowledged the importance of collaborative activities in improving their students' academic achievements. According to the teachers of their study, group work provides a chance for learners to practice using language, improve their speaking skills, and decrease their nervousness about speaking.

English is not the primary language in Kurdistan Region, but the students in Kurdistan Region are taught to

communicate in English through speaking exercises in their textbooks and other English language teaching materials provided by their EFL teachers, which may not be based on a task-oriented approach. English is introduced to them during their primary school years. However, despite the focus on oral communication, teachers may still have concerns about their students' speaking proficiency in their studies. This issue could arise from factors such as limited vocabulary, improper grammar knowledge, barely clear idea, and difficulty constructing clear sentences, which result in difficulty in constructing unmistakable sentences among EFL university students.

Oral presentation is seen as a motivating exercise that assists EFL Learners (EFL) in their communication skills (Brooks and Wilson, 2014). In this study, it is hypothesized that oral presentation as an educational exercise can boost students' self-assurance in speaking effectively to an audience. The study tries to explore how oral presentations can contribute to the development of students' speaking abilities. In other words, the research seeks to examine how students perceive the effectiveness of using oral presentations as a teaching technique to enhance their overall communication skills.

This research significantly contributes to bridging the gap in the existing literature on task-based language teaching (TBLT) in the Kurdistan region, particularly concerning the effectiveness of oral presentation skills in English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings. While TBLT has been widely studied in various contexts, its application and outcomes in regions with unique linguistic and cultural challenges, like Kurdistan, have received limited attention. This study's findings underscore the importance of task-based activities, such as oral presentations, in enhancing learners' confidence and communicative competence in English.

This research underscores the potential of oral presentations and task-based activities to enhance English language learning in the Kurdistan region and similar contexts. By focusing on students' speaking confidence, communicative competence, and collaborative learning, the findings offer important insights for developing effective EFL teaching strategies that are responsive to the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners. The study's emphasis on real-world relevance, learner autonomy, and the integrated development of language skills presents a compelling case for the broader application of TBLT in enhancing oral communication skills in EFL settings. Future research and educational practice should continue to explore and refine task-based approaches, ensuring they are tailored to meet the specific needs and opportunities of learners in diverse contexts.

The hypothesis for this study posits that the incorporation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) strategies, specifically through oral presentations, into English as Foreign Language (EFL) curricula will significantly enhance learners' confidence and communication skills. It is hypothesized that engaging students in real-world tasks and collaborative learning activities, which are directly related to their fields of study, will markedly improve their motivation

for and acquisition of the English language. Moreover, this study anticipates that the inclusion of a variety of speaking tasks, such as presentations and debates, will effectively overcome learners' psychological barriers and address linguistic challenges, with a particular focus on enhancing grammar and pronunciation. Drawing on the principles outlined by Ellis (2003), this research aims to demonstrate that a well-designed, learner-centered TBLT curriculum can prepare EFL learners for effective English usage in their forthcoming academic and professional contexts.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *A. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Speaking Proficiency*

The success of language learning is determined by the ability to engage in a conversation using the target language (Nunan, 2003). In other words, acquiring a new language is evaluated in terms of one's ability to speak the target language. Ur (2000) stated that among the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking is considered the most crucial one. People who are capable of speaking a language are identified as speakers of that language, as if speaking covers all other aspects of language proficiency. Ellis (2012) states that consistent practice of the language through interaction and task completion is a key to achieving effective language acquisition.

Rod Ellis, a leading authority in second language acquisition (SLA), has significantly advanced the application and understanding of task-based language teaching (TBLT) within language education. In 2010, Ellis enriched the field with pivotal insights into TBLT's theoretical foundations, practical implementation, and its role in facilitating authentic language use. His contributions emphasized creating meaningful tasks that mirror real-life language application, the cognitive aspects of TBLT that align task demands with learners' capabilities, and the integration of form-focused instruction to heighten grammatical awareness without compromising communicative objectives. Furthermore, Ellis's empirical research underscored TBLT's effectiveness in enhancing speaking and listening proficiency and addressed the necessity for targeted teacher training to navigate TBLT's pedagogical challenges. Through his comprehensive framework and empirical validation, Ellis's work from 2010 onward has profoundly influenced language teaching methodologies, promoting a shift toward communicative, task-oriented approaches that prioritize real-world language competencies.

Michael H. Long's distinguished contributions to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) have significantly shaped modern language education, paralleling efforts by figures like Rod Ellis. Long's theoretical and empirical work underscored the importance of utilizing authentic tasks as the cornerstone of language instruction, advocating for a focus on meaningful communication over direct linguistic form teaching (Long, 1985). His introduction of the "Interaction Hypothesis" (Long,

1996) further highlighted the role of interaction in language learning, aligning with TBLT principles by emphasizing the need for negotiation of meaning and modified input. Through seminal publications, including “Second Language Needs Analysis” (Long, 2005), Long’s advocacy for a task-based approach and needs analysis in course design has left a lasting impact on language teaching methodologies. His work, in concert with Ellis’s contributions, has collectively fostered a shift toward more communicative, task-oriented teaching practices that prioritize real-world language application, cementing both scholars’ legacies in promoting research-driven, effective language teaching strategies.

Task-based learning (TBL), deeply entrenched in the principles of communicative language teaching, prioritizes communicative tasks designed to simulate real-world interactions, thereby fostering collaborative student work. These tasks, aimed at eliciting specific grammar and vocabulary, encourage learners to engage in communication as they would outside the classroom, focusing on language acquisition through practical use rather than through direct instruction (Ellis, 2006). This approach is particularly relevant in EFL contexts, as identified by Cook (2011), where learners often face the challenge of limited real-world practice opportunities, making the classroom the primary setting for language use.

The challenge aligns with the issues highlighted by Ur (1996) in speaking classes, such as inhibition and lack of participation, which are further exacerbated by limited external language use opportunities. Chickering and Gamson (1987) advocate for active learning, emphasizing that passive observation falls short of fostering genuine language acquisition. They argue that engaging with material through discussion, application, and reflection allows students to assimilate and personalize language learning effectively. Ur (1996) extends this by suggesting practical classroom strategies like group work, the use of stimulating materials, and discussion skill training to mitigate speaking difficulties and encourage the use of the target language. These strategies align with the TBL framework by promoting an active, engaging, and communicative learning environment that can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language application, thus enhancing speaking skills in an EFL context.

### *B. Group Oral Presentations and Enhancing EFL Speaking Skills*

Socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky emphasizes the social aspect of language. Hence, learners have to communicate and use the target language with others to improve it. The theory of Vygotsky’s sociocultural perspective emphasizes the social nature of language acquisition. According to this theory, learners need to interact and communicate with others to enhance their language skills.

According to King (2002), the use of oral presentations can help learners develop their autonomy. This is because oral presentations require learners to use all four language skills, which in turn encourages them to become more

motivated and independent in their learning. Sharing and managing knowledge with a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter not only enhances language proficiency but also contributes to the acquisition of global knowledge by both presenters and audience members, as noted by Al-Isa and Al-Qubtan (2010).

An informative speech is a type of presentation in which the speaker explains a particular academic topic. This type of speech may involve clarifying a complex concept or illustrating a process. According to Chivers and Shoolbred (2007), informative presentations are commonly used in organizations where employees are required to report on project progress. The main goal of the speaker in an informative speech is to provide the audience with new and valuable information. Chivers and Shoolbred (ibid) explain that students can gain several advantages from making presentations, including active involvement in their own learning process, practice in a familiar setting or situation, improved self-assurance when speaking and presenting to an audience, development of a broad range of communication and presentation abilities, and preparation for the communication skills required in a work setting.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), when students collaborate in a group, they not only increase their own learning but also that of their peers. Furthermore, they exhibit a greater sense of accountability toward their learning. In the classroom, group work can lead to better performance than individual work. When EFL work on oral presentations in groups, it can increase their motivation and challenge, and they can achieve better results than working individually. This is partly due to the increased motivation, but also because group presentations offer opportunities to rehearse in front of others, as suggested by Chivers and Shoolbred (2007). Group presentations in educational settings serve various functions and offer multiple benefits, as highlighted in different studies. One key benefit of group presentations is their role in fostering collaborative learning. Collaborative learning through group presentations leads to higher achievement, better retention of information, improved interpersonal skills, and a positive interdependence among students, especially in diverse settings (Van Wyk and Haffeejee, 2017).

This context of collaborative learning and skill enhancement through oral presentations sets the stage for addressing the research question:

To what extent does group oral presentation improve students’ speaking skill?

Despite the apparent proficiency in grammar and vocabulary, EFL learners often struggle with fluency and confidence in speaking, leading to dissatisfaction and diminishing motivation over time. The hypothesis posited by this study suggests that by integrating group oral presentations into the EFL curriculum, students may significantly enhance their speaking abilities. This approach, aligned with the sociocultural emphasis on interaction and the communicative benefits of oral presentations, aims to offer a practical solution to the challenges faced by EFL learners in achieving fluency and confidence in their speaking skills.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study was on speaking skills of students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course related to the field of Architectural Engineering. To gather data, the researcher utilized two methods. The first method involved administering a questionnaire to second-year students at Architectural Engineering Department, Cihan University-Erbil to obtain their feedback on their involvement in oral presentations. The second method involved observing oral expression classes by two lecturers.

The researcher handed out the questionnaire to 25 students who were in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study. The survey questionnaire was written in English and translated in both Kurdish and Arabic languages and aimed to gather the students' opinions on a task-based activity in English classes. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale that included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree as response options.

Two lecturers observed the oral presentations to assess group performance based on some criteria including conveying coherent and structured content, correct and clear pronunciation, suitable word selection, grammatical and complete sentences, appropriate interaction with the audience, creative use of visual aids, and responding to questions with satisfactory explanation.

Each session in this study lasted for 90 min, and there was a total of 12 sessions during the course. The students addressed topics related to the city planning, building construction, Islamic architecture, and different types of building in Erbil. The students took turns to present their respective sections. They presented their works in a calm and supportive classroom atmosphere. The researcher is not sure when they are required to give presentations in public settings outside of the classroom, for example, in a field site, whether they can manage the circumstances.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In task-based language teaching (TBLT), language is primarily regarded as a means of communication not just a subject to study. Using tasks is the most evident approach to structure teaching in this manner. Therefore, employing a task-based learning method could prove advantageous in enhancing students' speaking skills (Hamad and Seyyedi, 2020). In this regard, Celce-Murcia (2001) also suggests that oral presentation is an effective method for improving students' speaking abilities.

The first objective of the study was to examine whether oral presentations has any effects in enhancing the speaking skills of EFL college students. The percentage of students' perception on speaking skill and improving it in a TBLT context is given in Table 1. The questionnaire results indicated that the students felt confident about demonstrating of the presentation topics although their pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar were ranked at a medium level. Furthermore, the responses from the students indicated that they had a positive attitude toward their presentation

experiences, and they made an effort to practice and prepare for the presentation.

The survey conducted to assess various factors influencing English language learning among students has yielded insightful results across different categories: Speaking mastery level and motivation, Time and Facility for Practicing Speaking, Speaking Activities, Students' Speaking Barriers, and Group Oral Presentation. According to the results provided in Table 1, a total of 25 responses were collected, providing a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and perceptions regarding their English-speaking skills and the educational environment supporting these skills.

In the category of Speaking Mastery Level and Motivation, the results indicate a moderate level of speaking mastery among the students, with 48% expressing neutrality about their speaking mastery level. However, a striking 92% of the respondents showed a positive attitude toward improving their English-speaking abilities, demonstrating a high level of motivation that they are eager to speak English well and fluently.

Regarding the time and facility for practicing speaking, the adequacy of time and learning facilities provided for practicing speaking in classes appears to be a concern. A majority of the respondents (62%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the time provided for practicing speaking in classes was appropriate. This suggests a need for improvement in the educational infrastructure and scheduling to better facilitate speaking practice.

In the speaking activities section, an overwhelming majority of students (84%) disagreed with the statement that they always communicate in English with classmates in all class interactions, indicating a significant reluctance to use English in peer interactions. Similarly, a combined 33% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they communicate in English with lecturers, suggesting a slightly higher but still limited use of English in formal educational settings.

The Students' speaking barrier category revealed that shyness, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes are significant barriers to speaking English. Specifically, 52% agreed that anxiety or shyness prevented them from speaking English, and a similar proportion (52%) cited a lack of knowledge about different topics as a barrier. Vocabulary issues were also identified as a notable barrier, with 44% of respondents indicating that vocabulary problems hindered their ability to speak English.

Finally, in the Group Oral Presentation segment, the responses were more positive, with a majority viewing group oral presentation as beneficial to their learning. Specifically, 81% of participants felt that doing an oral presentation motivates them to practice and speak better English. Moreover, a significant number of students recognized the value of practicing group oral presentations in enhancing their speaking skills and confidence.

These results highlight the multifaceted challenges in achieving speaking fluency, despite high motivation among learners. Barriers such as shyness, vocabulary limitations, and inadequate practice opportunities suggest the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance the learning environment and support effective language acquisition.

TABLE I  
THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE ON SPEAKING SKILL IN AN EAP COURSE

Categories	Statements	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	
1	Speaking Mastery Level and Motivation	My speaking mastery is high.	8	20	48	24	0
2		I have eagerness to speak English well and fluently.	0	4	8	68	20
3	Time and Facility for Practicing Speaking	The time provided for practicing speaking in speaking classes is appropriate.	8	54	20	8	0
4		The learning facilities in speaking classes are appropriate.	16	45	28	11	0
5	Speaking Activities	I always communicate in English with classmates in all class interactions.	0	84	11	5	0
6		I always communicate in English with lecturers in all speaking and non-speaking classes.	9	24	36	20	11
7	Students' Speaking Barrier	I didn't speak English because I didn't have enough confidence.	11	11	30	44	4
8		I didn't speak English because I had anxiety/felt shy.	4	20	24	52	0
9		I didn't speak English because of feeling afraid of lecturer.	11	69	20	0	0
10		I didn't speak English because I did not have enough knowledge about different topics.	11	9	24	52	4
11		I didn't speak English because I had a vocabulary problem.	8	16	32	40	4
12	Group Oral Presentation	Doing an oral presentation motivates me to practice and speak better.	0	8	11	73	8
13		I think practicing a group oral presentation helps me enhance my speaking skill.	0	24	44	28	4
14		I think practicing a group oral presentation gives me the confidence to improve my speaking skill.	0	4	11	68	17
15		Practicing with my classmates in group activities helped me understand and speak about the content better.	4	17	28	40	11

Throughout the assessment process of the oral presentations, two lecturers conducted an evaluation of the groups' performances, anchored in an extensive array of evaluative criteria: the logical coherence and structural integrity of the presented content, the precision and clarity of pronunciation, the judicious selection of vocabulary, the grammatical accuracy of sentences, the degree of audience engagement, the innovative application of visual aids, and the cogency of responses to inquiries. Despite this comprehensive scrutiny, the analysis unveiled some shortcomings, most notably the absence of substantial progress in the students' proficiency in pronunciation. In addition, attempts to refine grammatical exactitude in their verbal presentations fell short of the anticipated benchmarks. These insights suggest that while the students demonstrated commendable engagement with both the substance and structure of their presentations, the quest for nuanced linguistic refinement, especially in the domains of pronunciation and grammar, necessitates intensified emphasis and further developmental efforts.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight several key aspects of language learning, particularly in the context of speaking English that align with and diverge from the previous research in the field. The emphasis on speaking skills, the use of oral presentations as a confidence-boosting activity,

the psychological barriers to speaking, and the preference for group work offer a rich tapestry for comparison.

### A. Emphasis on Speaking Skills

Both this study and prior research underscore the importance of speaking skills in language learning. The prioritization of speaking skills development among learners echoes the consensus in language acquisition research that speaking is a critical component of language proficiency, acting as both a tool for communication and a vehicle for cultural and social engagement (Rao, 2019).

### B. Oral Presentations as a Confidence-Boosting Activity

The effectiveness of oral presentations in enhancing confidence and proficiency in speaking English is a finding that resonates with existing literature. The previous studies have also identified oral presentations as a valuable method for improving language skills, offering learners the opportunity to practice language in a structured yet authentic context (Brooks and Wilson, 2014; Makena and Feni, 2023). This study further enriches this perspective by highlighting the students' preference for selecting their own topics, which enhances engagement and personal relevance, a factor known to improve learning outcomes.

### C. Psychological Barriers to Speaking

The identification of shyness and fear of negative judgment as significant barriers to speaking is consistent with a vast

body of research. The previous studies have extensively documented how affective factors, such as anxiety, self-esteem, and fear of making mistakes, can significantly impact language learning and performance (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Boy Jon et al., 2022). This study adds to this understanding by noting the role of oral presentations in helping students overcome these barriers, suggesting that structured speaking opportunities can provide a safe environment for risk-taking and practice.

#### *D. Preference for Group Work*

The preference for performing oral presentations in groups rather than individually is an interesting finding that aligns with research on collaborative learning. The previous findings have shown that group work can facilitate language learning by creating a supportive environment where learners can interact, share knowledge, and provide feedback to one another (Norman, 2022). This study's observation that group work helps in overcoming psychological barriers and fostering cooperation and collaboration adds a practical dimension to the theoretical understanding of collaborative learning benefits.

#### *E. Contribution to Existing Literature*

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the benefits of oral presentations in language learning, particularly in terms of boosting confidence, overcoming psychological barriers, and fostering collaborative learning. By highlighting the learners' preferences and perceived benefits, this research suggests practical approaches for language educators to design more effective speaking activities that cater to learners' needs and challenges.

Although the students experienced fear and anxiety when speaking in front of others due to the possibility of negative judgment from their classmates, their questionnaire responses demonstrated that oral presentations were an enjoyable speaking activity for them since they could express themselves freely during explaining their favorite topics. Moreover, oral presentations offer a benefit to learners by fostering cooperation and collaboration through activities such as working in pairs or small groups. This could help learners evaluate each other's work and engage in self-assessment. Learners preferred to perform in groups rather than individually as it allowed them to share knowledge and support each other during the activity.

In summary, this study's findings complement and expand on previous research by offering detailed insights into how specific speaking activities, such as oral presentations, can be leveraged to address common challenges in language learning. It underscores the importance of learner-centered approaches and the role of psychological factors in language acquisition, providing valuable directions for future research and educational practice.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of both the student questionnaire and the teacher's observation did not support the research hypothesis

that well-structured oral presentations would improve students' speaking ability significantly. However, EFL learners expressed their opinions confirming the crucial role of oral presentations in developing their confidence to speak in English. The study's findings suggest that incorporating a task-based approach in EFL classes can become an effective way to enhance oral communication skills, and learners will be more motivated to learn through this approach.

The researcher had several reasons for choosing oral presentation as a means to enhance students' speaking ability in their EAP course. First, this task-based activity in their technical English course emphasizes the learning of content rather than just language targets. This means that students can engage with real-world subjects and topics that are of interest to them and they need after their graduation. Second, the task is centered around the students themselves, although the teacher still provides significant support and guidance throughout the process.

During the oral presentations, teachers' observations were crucial in providing specific feedback to students aimed at improving their speaking abilities. By evaluating criteria such as content coherence, pronunciation, word selection, grammatical accuracy, audience interaction, use of visual aids, and response to questions, lecturers pinpointed both strengths and areas needing improvement. Feedback covered the need for clearer content structure, better pronunciation and word choice, grammatical correctness, engaging audience interaction, effective use of visual aids, and adeptness at responding to questions. Teachers recommended practices such as using mind maps for organization, consulting pronunciation resources, expanding vocabulary, proofreading for grammar, designing engaging slides, and preparing for audience questions, all aimed at enhancing students' speaking performance.

The comprehensive feedback led to a significant increase in students' awareness of the complexities of effective oral communication and provided them with concrete steps for improvement. Despite the study's hypothesis that structured oral presentations would markedly enhance speaking skills not being fully supported, the feedback highlighted the importance of continuous practice and a task-based learning approach. This approach, emphasizing real-world application and content engagement, was well-received by students, who appreciated the actionable feedback and the focus on developing practical skills. The emphasis on task-based learning, underpinned by detailed and targeted feedback, emerged as a key motivator for students, crucial for boosting their confidence and proficiency in English communication.

#### *A. Implication for Further Study*

This study provides valuable insights for enhancing English for academic purposes (EAP) courses, emphasizing the integration of oral presentations to improve linguistic competence, confidence, and collaborative learning. Key recommendations include incorporating oral presentation tasks relevant to students' fields, prioritizing speaking skills and confidence-building activities, and designing

collaborative learning experiences with structured feedback mechanisms. Despite the anticipated benefits, the study acknowledges limitations, such as the methodology for assessing speaking improvements and the short-term nature of the observation period, which may not fully capture the progression in speaking skills. Future research directions suggest the need for longitudinal and comparative studies to evaluate the long-term impact of oral presentations, explore the effectiveness of various feedback types, and consider the influence of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on learner engagement. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to developing speaking skills in EAP courses and calls for further investigation into task-based teaching strategies tailored to the diverse needs of EFL learners.

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