

LANGUAGES

The Effect of Task-Based Learning on Grammar Competence and Student Engagement among Grade 11 Students: A Case Study at Phong Phu High School in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of Task-Based Learning (TBL) on Grade 11 students' grammar competence and engagement at Phong Phu High School in Ho Chi Minh City. Grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), this study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design supplemented by questionnaire and structured classroom observation data. The quasi-experimental component involved two intact classes: an experimental group ($n = 34$) receiving task-based grammar instruction and a control group ($n = 36$) receiving conventional, textbook-based instruction. Grammar competence was assessed through pre- and post-tests, while students' perceptions and engagement were examined through a six-item effectiveness scale, a six-item engagement scale, and eight-week classroom observations. Because the test scores were non-normally distributed, Mann–Whitney U and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used. The groups were comparable at pre-test ($U = 480.50$, $Z = -1.558$, $p = 0.119$). Although both groups showed significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, the experimental group demonstrated significantly greater gains. A Mann–Whitney U test of individual change scores (post-test – pre-test) revealed a significantly larger median gain for the experimental group ($Md = 0.70$, $IQR = 0.48$) than for the control group ($Md = 0.30$, $IQR = 0.20$), $U = 114.50$, $Z = -5.89$, $p < 0.001$, with a large effect size ($r = 0.70$). These findings indicate that task-based grammar instruction was associated with greater improvement in students' grammar performance than conventional instruction. Questionnaire results showed highly positive perceptions of TBL, while data from classroom observations descriptively indicated positive trends in participation, collaboration, attention, and confidence. These preliminary findings suggest that TBL can serve as a supportive, learner-centred approach to grammar instruction in Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms.

Keywords: task-based learning; grammar competence; student engagement; communicative language teaching; Vietnamese EFL; Grade 11.

Introduction

Grammar provides an important structural foundation for meaningful language use, yet grammar instruction in many Vietnamese EFL classrooms remains strongly influenced by rule explanation, memorisation, textbook exercises, and examination requirements. Such practices can help learners develop explicit knowledge of forms, but they may provide limited opportunities to use grammatical structures in meaningful communication [1, 2]. This tension is particularly relevant at the upper-secondary level, where students are expected to develop both accuracy and the ability to communicate effectively in English.

In task-based instruction, language is learned through purposeful activities that require learners to understand meaning, exchange information, solve problems, and achieve an outcome. TBL therefore

shifts classroom activity from simply studying rules toward using language as a resource for communication [3, 4]. Ellis [3] argues that tasks create conditions in which learners can focus primarily on meaning while still developing attention to form. Nunan [4] similarly places communicative tasks at the centre of language teaching, emphasizing learner participation and the relationship between classroom activity and real-world language use.

The Vietnamese EFL context provides a particularly relevant setting for examining this approach. Previous research has reported that Vietnamese EFL classrooms continue to emphasize explicit grammar instruction and examination-oriented learning, while opportunities for meaningful communicative use remain comparatively limited [6]. Recent Vietnamese studies have also suggested that task-based and real-world activities can support grammar acquisition and

more active classroom participation [6]. However, evidence from Grade 11 students in a public high-school setting remains limited, particularly when grammar achievement and engagement are considered together.

Student engagement is also central to the effectiveness of communicative instruction. Engagement can be understood through behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, including participation, sustained attention, mental investment, confidence, and interest [7]. In task-based classrooms, meaningful tasks can increase time-on-task and encourage learners to take risks in using language because learners need to interact with peers and complete a shared goal [8]. Such engagement is theoretically consistent with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which views interaction and meaningful language use as essential components of language learning [9].

The present study therefore examines the effect of TBL on Grade 11 students' grammar competence and engagement at Phong Phu High School in Ho Chi Minh City. The study addresses two research questions: (1) To what extent does Task-Based Learning enhance students' grammar competence based on pre- and post-test results? and (2) How do students perceive the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning, and how does it affect their engagement in learning grammar? By combining test results, questionnaire data, and classroom observations, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive account of the cognitive and affective outcomes of task-based grammar instruction.

Literature Review

Grammar Competence and Communicative Language Teaching

Grammar competence involves knowledge of grammatical forms and the ability to use them accurately and appropriately. Within communicative competence, grammar is not an isolated body of rules but one component of a broader ability to use language effectively in context [9, 10]. This distinction is important in EFL classrooms because students may demonstrate knowledge of a rule in a controlled exercise without being able to use the structure spontaneously in communication.

Communicative Language Teaching responds to this problem by emphasizing meaningful interaction, learner participation, and functional language use. Rather than treating grammar only as an object of explanation, communicative approaches provide opportunities for learners to notice, practise, and use grammatical forms while accomplishing communicative purposes [1, 9]. Research on instructed second-language learning also suggests that explicit knowledge and meaningful practice can complement one another rather than functioning as mutually exclusive alternatives [11].

Task-Based Learning

Task-Based Learning is a development of communicative pedagogy in which tasks constitute the central unit of classroom activity. A task normally requires learners to use language to achieve an outcome, solve a problem, exchange information, or complete an activity. Ellis [3] and Willis and Willis [12] describe task-based teaching as a process that can include pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task reflection or language-focused work. This structure allows teachers to create opportunities for meaning-focused interaction while subsequently drawing learners' attention to useful grammatical forms.

Long [13] argues that task-based teaching can provide a principled way of connecting classroom language learning with authentic communicative needs. In addition, TBL may promote learner autonomy because students are required to make choices, negotiate meaning, and contribute to task completion rather than waiting for the teacher to provide every answer. For grammar instruction, this means that grammatical structures can be treated as tools for expressing meanings and achieving communicative goals.

Empirical work in Asian and Vietnamese settings has reported positive associations between task-based instruction and language learning outcomes. Carless [15] found that the implementation of task-based approaches in secondary-school settings can increase opportunities for communication, although teachers need to manage time, task complexity, and classroom expectations carefully. Vietnamese studies have likewise reported benefits of task-based grammar instruction and learners' generally favourable perceptions of communication-oriented grammar teaching [6]. These findings provide a rationale for examining TBL in another Vietnamese Grade 11 context.

Although PPP and TBL differ in the sequencing and organization of instruction, they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive or as representing a simple contrast between decontextualized and communicative teaching. Well-designed PPP instruction may include meaningful and communicative language use, particularly during the production stage, while TBL may also incorporate explicit attention to linguistic form. As Swan [5] argues, some claims concerning the advantages of task-based instruction over more structured approaches require cautious interpretation. Accordingly, the distinction between PPP and TBL in the present study is understood primarily in terms of how and when form-focused instruction is integrated with meaningful language use. Whereas PPP typically introduces and practices target forms before learners use them more independently, TBL organizes instruction around meaning-focused tasks, with attention to form incorporated before, during, or after task performance. Thus, the present study does not assume the inherent superiority of TBL over PPP; rather, it empirically examines whether task-based grammar instruction is associated with different

learning outcomes and levels of student engagement in the specific Grade 11 EFL context investigated. PPP and TBL can both incorporate form-focused and communicative work, but they differ particularly in the sequencing and integration of form and meaning. TBL's effectiveness is something the study investigates, not something the theoretical framework assumes in advance.

Student Engagement in Task-Based Grammar Learning

Engagement is a multidimensional construct. Fredricks et al. [7] distinguish behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. In a grammar classroom, behavioural engagement may be visible through participation and effort; cognitive engagement may involve sustained attention and strategic thinking; and emotional engagement may involve interest, enjoyment, and confidence. TBL is expected to support these dimensions because tasks require learners to interact, make decisions, solve problems, and produce language for a purpose.

Meaningful tasks can also support motivation by creating a clear reason for learners to use grammatical structures. Dörnyei [8] emphasizes the importance of classroom conditions that sustain learners' attention and willingness to participate. From this perspective, engagement is not simply an additional outcome of grammar instruction; it can help explain how learners obtain sufficient opportunities to notice, practise, retrieve, and apply grammatical knowledge.

Research Gap

Although TBL has been extensively discussed in the international literature, fewer studies have examined its combined effects on grammar competence and student engagement among Vietnamese upper-secondary learners. Existing Vietnamese evidence suggests potential benefits, but classroom context, learner age, curriculum, task design, and implementation conditions can influence outcomes [5, 6]. The present case study addresses this gap by comparing a task-based Grade 11 class with a conventionally taught class, utilizing a quantitative approach to examine both student perceptions and structured classroom observations.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

The study employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental design involving two intact Grade 11 classes at Phong Phu High School in Ho Chi Minh City. The total sample comprised 70 students: 34 students in the experimental group and 36 students in the control group. The two groups followed the same Grade 11 English curriculum and were taught by the same teacher. The experimental group received TBL instruction, whereas

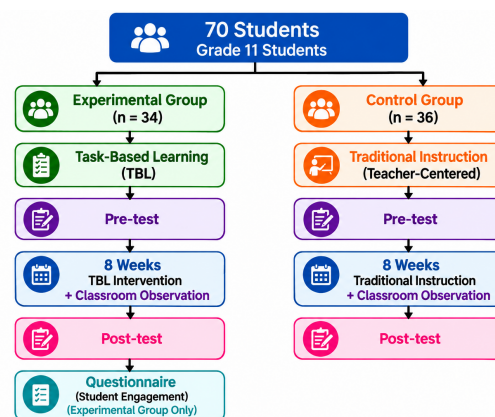


Figure 1: Quasi-experimental research design and data collection procedure.

the control group followed conventional textbook-based Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) instruction. The intervention lasted eight weeks.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration. As all participants were under 18 years of age, informed consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians, and the students were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was voluntary, and students were assured that they could withdraw from the study without penalty. All collected data were treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes. No personally identifiable information was reported in the study.

Convenience sampling was used because the study was conducted within naturally existing classes. Participants were Grade 11 learners aged approximately 16–17 years, with several years of previous English study.

The use of intact classes increased ecological validity by allowing the intervention to occur under normal school conditions, although it also limits the generalisability of the findings.

Both groups completed a pre-test before the intervention. During the eight-week period, the experimental class engaged in communicative tasks such as pair and group discussions, role-plays, information-gap activities, mind mapping, games, and problem-solving. The lessons followed a task-based sequence in which learners prepared for a task, completed it through interaction, and subsequently focused on language forms and performance. The control class studied the same curriculum through explicit explanation, textbook exercises, controlled practice, and limited freer practice.

Because the pre-test and post-test scores were non-normally distributed, non-parametric procedures were employed. Mann–Whitney U tests were used for between-group comparisons, whereas Wilcoxon

signed-rank tests were used to examine within-group pre-test–post-test changes. Questionnaire data were summarized using frequencies, means, and standard deviations, while classroom observation data were interpreted descriptively as supplementary evidence. Effect sizes for between-group comparisons were reported as r .

Instruments

First, the pre-test and post-test assessed students' grammar competence, operationalized as their ability to recognize and accurately apply the target grammatical structures covered during the eight-week intervention. The tests included grammar-recognition items and contextualized application items and were aligned with the Grade 11 English curriculum and the grammatical content taught during the intervention. To establish content validity, the test specifications and items were reviewed by three experienced English teachers for alignment with the target structures, appropriateness for Grade 11 learners, clarity of instructions, and level of difficulty. Revisions were made based on their feedback before administration. All items had objectively correct responses and were scored using a predetermined answer key and standardized scoring criteria applied consistently to all participants.

Second, a student questionnaire measured students' perceptions of TBL effectiveness and their self-reported engagement in task-based grammar learning using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Theme 1 comprised six items assessing perceived effectiveness in understanding, applying, retaining, and confidently using grammar. Theme 2 comprised six items related to engagement in grammar lessons. Although informed by the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement, the items primarily operationalized behavioural engagement, particularly participation, task involvement, attention, collaboration, effort, and persistence. Internal consistency was high for Theme 1 (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.919$) and good for Theme 2 ($\alpha = 0.813$).

Third, a structured classroom observation checklist was used to provide descriptive evidence of students' observable engagement and grammar-related behaviours during the eight-week intervention. The six indicators were on-task behaviour, student–student interaction, student–teacher interaction, understanding of target grammar, accurate grammar application, and the use of grammar in communicative contexts. Two observers independently rated the experimental class using a five-point frequency scale, with higher scores indicating more frequent occurrence of the observed behaviour. Exact agreement was obtained for five of the six indicators (83.3%), and the observers' overall mean ratings were closely aligned, providing evidence of consistency in the observational ratings.

Results and Discussion

Baseline Comparability

The normality tests indicated statistically significant departures from normality for the pre-test and post-test scores in both groups; therefore, non-parametric tests were used. At pre-test, the control group obtained $M = 7.03$ ($SD = 1.22$), while the experimental group obtained $M = 7.44$ ($SD = 1.24$). Although the experimental group had a slightly higher descriptive score, the difference was not statistically significant, $U = 480.50$, $Z = -1.558$, $p = 0.119$. The groups can therefore be considered reasonably comparable before the intervention, strengthening the interpretation of subsequent post-test differences.

Grammar Competence after the Intervention

Both groups improved significantly from pre-test to post-test. In the control group, 28 of 36 students (77.8%) achieved higher post-test scores, five students decreased, and three remained unchanged, yielding $Z = -4.013$, $p < 0.001$. In contrast, all 34 students in the experimental group obtained higher post-test scores, with no negative ranks or ties; the improvement was statistically significant, $Z = -5.115$, $p < 0.001$. The consistency of improvement in the experimental group is notable because every learner moved in the expected direction.

More importantly, the between-group comparison showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group at post-test. The control group achieved $M = 7.264$ ($SD = 1.137$), compared with $M = 8.221$ ($SD = 1.145$) for the experimental group. The experimental group also had a substantially higher mean rank (44.01) than the control group (27.46). The Mann–Whitney U test confirmed a statistically significant difference, $U = 322.50$, $Z = -3.405$, $p = 0.001$, with $r = 0.41$, representing a moderate effect. Thus, the change from non-significant baseline differences to a significant post-test advantage provides evidence that the task-based intervention was associated with stronger grammar outcomes.

To directly examine whether the extent of improvement differed between the two groups, individual change scores were calculated by subtracting each participant's pre-test score from the corresponding post-test score. The experimental group showed a larger median gain ($Md = 0.70$, $IQR = 0.48$) than the control group ($Md = 0.30$, $IQR = 0.20$). The experimental group also had a substantially higher mean rank (50.13) than the control group (21.68). A Mann–Whitney U test indicated that the change scores differed significantly between the two groups, $U = 114.50$, $Z = -5.89$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was large ($r = 0.70$), indicating a substantial between-group difference in the magnitude of improvement. These results provide direct statistical evidence that the experimental group demonstrated greater gains

Table 1: Within-group pre-test–post-test comparisons using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests.

Group	<i>n</i>	Pre-test <i>M</i>	Post-test <i>M</i>	Change	Test
Control	36	7.03	7.264	Improved	$Z = -4.013$, $p < 0.001$
Experimental	34	7.44	8.221	Improved	$Z = -5.115$, $p < 0.001$

Note. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared within each group using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. $p < 0.001$.

Table 2: Comparison of change scores between the control and experimental groups.

Group	<i>n</i>	Q1	Median (<i>Md</i>)	Q3	IQR	Mean rank
Control	36	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	21.68
Experimental	34	0.575	0.7	1.05	0.48	50.13

Table 3: Questionnaire results on the effectiveness of task-based learning.

Theme 1 item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
S1 – understand grammar more clearly	4.44	0.561	Very high
S2 – apply grammar more easily	4.21	0.479	High
S3 – remember grammar better	4.53	0.507	Very high
S4 – recognise/correct errors	4.59	0.500	Very high
S5 – use grammar naturally	4.26	0.448	Very high
S6 – confidence in grammar use	4.56	0.504	Very high

in grammar scores than the control group over the eight-week intervention.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical premise of TBL that grammatical knowledge can develop through meaningful language use rather than through decontextualized drills alone [3, 4, 13]. In the present study, learners were required to retrieve and apply target forms while completing communicative tasks. This repeated movement between meaning, interaction, and attention to form may have provided more opportunities for functional practice than the conventional approach. The findings also correspond with Vietnamese studies reporting positive effects of task-based activities on grammar acquisition [6]. At the same time, the result should be interpreted as evidence from one school and two intact classes rather than as proof that TBL will produce identical effects in all Vietnamese contexts.

Students' Perceptions of TBL Effectiveness

Students reported strongly positive perceptions of the effectiveness of TBL. Across the six effectiveness items, means ranged from 4.21 to 4.59. The highest ratings concerned recognising and correcting grammar mistakes ($M = 4.59$), confidence in using grammar ($M = 4.56$), and remembering grammar better ($M = 4.53$). No student selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree on any Theme 1 item, while agreement and strong agreement dominated the response distribution.

These results suggest that students perceived task-based activities as useful not only for understanding grammatical rules but also for retaining and applying them.

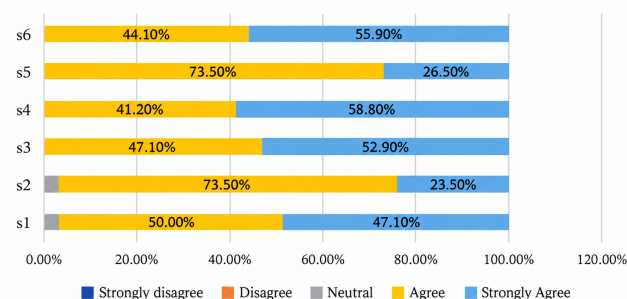
Figure 2: Percentage distribution of students' responses to Theme 1 statements

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Student Engagement

Theme 2 also revealed favourable engagement. Mean scores ranged from 3.97 to 4.59, with the highest ratings for close attention ($M = 4.59$), active participation ($M = 4.56$), and collaborative effort ($M = 4.53$). Most responses fell in the Agree or Strongly Agree categories, and no negative responses were recorded. Although the lower means for sustained involvement ($M = 3.97$) and overall involvement ($M = 4.00$) indicate some variation, both remained above the neutral point.

The pattern is consistent with the multidimensional view of engagement proposed by Fredricks et al. [7], as students reported and demonstrated behavioural participation, cognitive attention, and positive involvement.

The questionnaire was designed to assess students' self-reported engagement with task-based grammar learning. Although the broader theoretical frame-

Table 4: Questionnaire results on engagement in task-based learning.

Engagement item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
S1 – active participation	4.56	0.50	Very high
S2 – close attention	4.59	0.50	Very high
S3 – engagement in task work	4.24	0.43	Very high
S4 – sustained involvement	3.97	0.39	High
S5 – collaborative effort	4.53	0.51	Very high
S6 – overall involvement	4.00	0.35	High

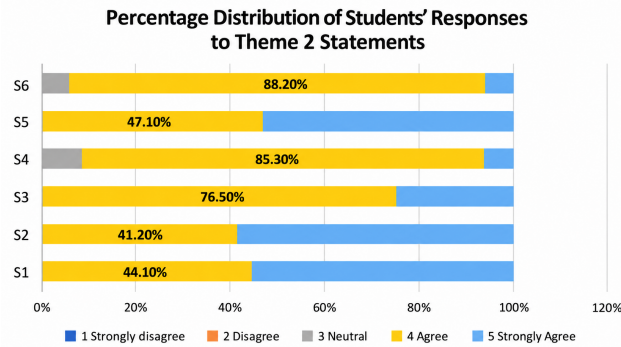


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of students' responses to Theme 2 statements.

work of Fredricks et al. (2004) conceptualizes student engagement as comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, the items used in the present study primarily operationalized behavioral engagement, including active participation, attention, sustained involvement, effort, and collaboration during classroom tasks. Accordingly, the questionnaire findings are interpreted primarily as indicators of behavioral engagement rather than as a comprehensive measure of all three engagement dimensions.

Classroom Observation

Observation data provided contextual support for the questionnaire findings. During the early weeks, some experimental-group students were hesitant and depended on teacher support. As the task cycles became familiar, students became more active, confident, and independent. Pair and group activities promoted negotiation of meaning, peer support, and more frequent use of English. By the later weeks, learners demonstrated greater accuracy, fluency, and self-correction when applying grammatical forms in communicative situations. In contrast, the control class remained more teacher-directed, with greater dependence on textbook exercises and explicit explanation.

The classroom observation checklist was designed to assess observable manifestations of students' behavioral engagement during task-based grammar lessons, including participation, attention, task involvement, collaboration, and persistence. Each indicator was rated using a five-point frequency scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Always. Thus, a rating of 4 indicated that the target behavior was observed frequently but not consistently throughout the observation period, whereas a rating of

5 indicated that the behavior was observed consistently or almost continuously during the relevant classroom activities. The same operational definitions and scoring criteria were used by both observers.

The two observers agreed exactly on five of six indicators, yielding 83.3% exact agreement. Their overall ratings were also closely aligned ($M = 4.33$ and $M = 4.50$), with all ratings falling in the High or Very High categories. The classroom observations provided supplementary descriptive evidence of students' observable engagement during the task-based lessons. Students were frequently observed participating in task activities, collaborating with peers, and contributing to group work. These observations are broadly consistent with the patterns reported in the student questionnaire; however, no statistical association between the questionnaire and observation data was examined. Therefore, the two sources of evidence are interpreted separately rather than as demonstrating statistical convergence. The observational pattern is theoretically compatible with TBL because tasks create a need for interaction and require learners to sustain attention in order to achieve an outcome [12, 13].

Discussion in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

The findings provide empirical support for the study's CLT-oriented theoretical framework. CLT emphasizes meaningful communication, interaction, and the functional use of language, while TBL operationalizes these principles by making communicative tasks central to instruction [9]. The higher post-test performance of the experimental group therefore suggests that grammar learning can be strengthened when learners repeatedly use grammatical forms to accomplish meaningful purposes rather than only completing isolated exercises.

The results also support the distinction between grammatical knowledge and grammatical use. The control group improved significantly, showing that conventional instruction can support learning; however, the experimental group improved more consistently and achieved the higher post-test score. This pattern suggests that explicit knowledge may be strengthened when combined with opportunities for retrieval, interaction, feedback, and communicative application. Such an interpretation is compatible with research distinguishing explicit and implicit dimensions of second-language knowledge [11] and with TBL accounts emphasizing attention to form within meaning-focused activity [3, 13].

Table 5: Inter-observer agreement on the classroom observation checklist.

Indicator	Observer 1	Observer 2	Agreement
On-task behaviour	4 (High)	4 (High)	Yes
Student–student interaction	4 (High)	5 (Very High)	No
Student–teacher interaction	5 (Very High)	5 (Very High)	Yes
Understanding target grammar	4 (High)	4 (High)	Yes
Accurate grammar application	5 (Very High)	5 (Very High)	Yes
Grammar in communicative contexts	4 (High)	4 (High)	Yes
Overall	$M = 4.33$	$M = 4.50$	5/6 = 83.3%

The engagement findings further reinforce the theoretical model. Students' high questionnaire ratings and the observers' high evaluations indicate that task-based grammar instruction created a classroom environment characterised by participation, collaboration, attention, and confidence. These outcomes correspond to the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement [7]. They also support the argument that engagement can facilitate time-on-task and willingness to experiment with language [8]. Thus, the cognitive and affective findings are aligned, suggesting that TBL was associated not only with better grammar performance but also with classroom behaviours and perceptions theoretically conducive to language learning. The findings provide empirical support for the theoretical view that task-based learning (TBL) connects meaningful language use with grammatical development. The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test, with a moderate effect size ($r = 0.41$), indicating both statistical and educational significance. This finding is consistent with Nunan's emphasis on learner engagement and communicative outcomes, Ellis's view of tasks as opportunities to prioritize meaning before form, and Long's focus-on-form perspective. In the present study, students used target grammatical structures during meaningful communicative activities and subsequently received opportunities to review grammatical form. This combination of meaning-focused interaction, retrieval, feedback, and attention to form may have contributed to the experimental group's stronger grammatical performance.

The findings on student engagement also support the theoretical framework. Questionnaire results showed highly positive perceptions of TBL, with efficacy-item means ranging from $M = 4.21$ to 4.59 and engagement-item means from $M = 3.97$ to 4.59 . Classroom observations further indicated increased participation, confidence, peer interaction, and independent use of grammar. These findings are consistent with Fredricks et al.'s multidimensional model of engagement and Dörnyei's emphasis on supportive learning environments. Overall, the results suggest that meaningful tasks can simultaneously support grammatical competence and behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, supporting the relevance of TBL and communicative language teaching to Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms. Rather than replacing explicit grammar instruction, TBL can

complement it by providing students with opportunities to apply grammatical knowledge meaningfully while maintaining attention to accuracy.

Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

This case study investigated the effect of TBL on Grade 11 students' grammar competence and engagement at Phong Phu High School. The two groups were comparable at the beginning of the study, but after eight weeks the experimental group achieved significantly higher grammar performance than the control group, with a moderate effect size. Students also reported highly positive perceptions of TBL, particularly regarding grammar understanding, retention, application, confidence, participation, attention, and collaboration. Classroom observations were aligned with these findings by showing increasingly active and independent participation in task-based lessons. Overall, the evidence supports TBL as a promising communicative approach to grammar instruction in this Vietnamese upper-secondary context.

The questionnaire and observation findings suggest that students were actively involved in the task-based grammar activities, particularly in terms of participation, attention, sustained involvement, and collaboration.

Overall, the results suggest that meaningful tasks can support grammatical competence and students' engagement, particularly behavioral engagement, in Vietnamese upper-secondary EFL classrooms.

Pedagogical Implications

For teachers, the findings suggest that grammar lessons can benefit from carefully designed tasks that require learners to use target structures for meaningful purposes. Tasks should be aligned with curriculum objectives and should include clear outcomes, manageable instructions, opportunities for pair or group interaction, and a post-task stage in which teachers address important grammatical forms and errors.

For learners, task-based grammar work can provide more opportunities to practise grammar as a resource for communication. Teachers can therefore gradually increase learner responsibility while maintaining

scaffolding for difficult structures. The observation findings suggest that students may need an initial adjustment period before becoming confident with task-based routines.

For curriculum designers and schools, the results indicate that TBL can be integrated with existing textbook materials rather than requiring a complete replacement of the curriculum. Conventional explanation and controlled practice can be retained where useful, while communicative tasks can be added to provide opportunities for application, interaction, and reflection.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. It was conducted at one high school with two intact classes and a relatively small sample, so the findings should not be generalized broadly without further evidence. The eight-week intervention also does not establish long-term retention. In addition, questionnaire responses were self-reported and may be affected by response tendencies. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples, longer interventions, and follow-up assessments of grammar retention. Comparative studies could also examine different task types, levels of teacher scaffolding, and effects on speaking, writing, or broader communicative competence.

Although engagement was theoretically conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, the instruments used in this study primarily captured behavioral engagement. Future research should employ validated multidimensional engagement scales that separately assess behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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