

A STUDY ON TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to introduce Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), to carry out the method of TBLT in English classes and to create a real purpose for language use and provide a natural context for language study. Considering the principles of TBLT (i.e., authentic, learner-centered, using language, intentional and interactive), it seems tasks as classroom undertakings that are intended to result in pragmatic language use. Tasks are a central component of TBLT in language classrooms because they provide a context that activates learning processes and promotes L2 learning. It is important to remember that TBLT is an approach rather than a method. It assumes that the teacher respects the students as individuals and wants them to succeed. It also acknowledges that motivation, attitudes to learning, students' beliefs, language anxiety and preferred learning styles, have more effect on learning than materials or methods. We therefore need to take these into account in classrooms, taking advantage of the opportunity TBLT gives teachers to promote a student-centered learning environment. Teacher-centered controls, threats, rewards and restrictions are not an effective means of stimulating learning, since no-one can be forced to learn. If we can instead stimulate a need to learn, and a desire to learn, based on unconditional respect and mutual trust, learning will take place in an enjoyable and facilitative way.

Key words: task, TBLT, task-based, classroom practice

The core concept of TBLT is the task. The definition of a task has evolved over the last 20 years through empirical research in classroom implementation. There are different definitions based on everything from the real world to pedagogical perspectives of tasks. For a balanced view on tasks, the definitions from various perspectives are discussed chronologically.

According to Richards and Rogers, Task-Based Language Learning strategy focuses on communication through task completion. Students get engaged with a task they are truly interested in, and they aim to carry it out only using the target language and its taught elements. In other words, in the topic of recycling for instance, that is being taught for a couple of weeks, students are engaged in various tasks that could eventually lead to a presentation project, using the authentic language learned and the necessary tools, such as the internet. The key to this language teaching and learning

methodology is not the correct and strict use of the language taught but the emphasis is given to the task's outcome and to the steps followed for its culmination.

The types of tasks in Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning

1. **Information gap activities:** as the name implies, this sort of TBLT activity allows students to exchange information or learn things about each other. For example, students in pairs should ask and answer questions so as to learn each other's weekly schedule, aiming to find a common pastime such as going to the movies.

2. **Reasoning gap activities:** during this language learning activity, students are asked to convey meaning from something you have given to them. The trick is that sometimes what they understood and what they have to present to you in the end might be different. For example, you can ask your students to work on a timetable and on some variables and solve a problem.

3. **Opinion gap activities:** for creative students, this language teaching activity might be the most preferred, as they are asked to share their own opinions or feelings about a specific situation. For example, you could hand them a worksheet with six empty blocks and ask them to make a comic using the verbs you learned this week, or you could set up a debate on a current social topic

In essence, a language lesson based on the Task-Based Language Teaching method has three stages, the Pre-Task Activity, the Task and the Wrap-up or Review.

During the Pre-Task Activity, you introduce the task to the students, trying to motivate them and make them look forward to it. At this point, you also set your expectations and you show them a finished example of the same task as guidance as well as a method to avoid using the native tongue to answer the many questions students might have. You proceed to hand out stationery and other necessary materials, and form groups or pairs.

The Task stage is where you let your students shine. Focus on making them work in small groups so even the least motivated student can grasp the chance to work. Do not intervene, let them communicate on their own and only walk around the classroom monitoring the process. Assist them only if they do not know how to proceed.

When the task is over, it is time for the Review. Groups have the chance to present their work (video, poster, story) to you and to their peers and receive constructive feedback.

3 awesome Task-Based Language Learning activity examples

Plan a trip– Divide students into groups and after having an exciting travelling conversation, ask them to brainstorm on planning a trip. Prompt them to ask questions like how long the trip will last; what is the budget; what kind of activities they should do. Provide them with objects like a map, set a specific time, and let them pick a real or imaginary destination and create the travelling plan.

Problem-solving– You could present them with various everyday problems they might face. For example, you could encourage them to brainstorm solutions to a certain school problem and create a poster to display that to the rest of the school community. For more advanced or older in age groups, you could set up debates on social issues.

Story making– Give them a character or the beginning of an unknown story or fairytale to them and give them some minutes to brainstorm the story’s ending on their own before being paired. When the groups are formed they will have the chance to listen to their classmates’ ideas and decide on a specific ending after debating all the ideas.

From pedagogical perspectives, real world target tasks are likely to be too difficult for learners to achieve because of potential semantic, pragmatic, lexical and syntactic difficulties. Thus, pedagogical tasks should represent a bridge to real world tasks. Breen tries to define task from the pedagogical perspective:

...any structured language leaning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. “Task” is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning-from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making.

In conclusion, considering the principles of TBLT (i.e., authentic, learner-centered, using language, intentional and interactive), the author defines tasks as classroom undertakings that are intended to result in pragmatic language use. Tasks are a central component of TBLT in language classrooms because they provide a context that activates learning processes and promotes L2 learning.

Nunan (2005) suggests the following 8 principles of TBL:

- (1) Scaffolding: Lessons and materials should provide support to the students.
- (2) Task chains: Each exercise, activity and task should build upon the ones that have gone before.
- (3) Recycling: Recycling language maximizes opportunities for learning.
- (4) Organic learning: Language ability “grows” gradually.
- (5) Active learning: Learners learn best by actively using the language they are learning. They learn by doing.
- (6) Integration: The lesson should teach grammatical form and how the form is used for purposes of communication.
- (7) Reflection: Learners should be given opportunities to think about what they have learned and how well they are doing.
- (8) Copying to creation: Learners should not only drill and practice what has been written for them, but also be given the opportunity to use their creativity and imagination and what they have learned to solve real world tasks.

The list of used literature:

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