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## **Propelling Language Learning With Task-Based Approaches**

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### **Abstract**

The four basic language skills in the English language are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Obviously, speaking is the most important one as it allows people to express themselves clearly and precisely. However, learning to speak in English has been a problem for many English learners. In order to propel language learning forward Task Based Language teaching has been effectively applied in the English language classroom. The implementation of tasks acts as an instrument and helps in communication and language learning. Language can be developed when tasks become components in supporting the learning process. In recent years, task-based language instruction has emerged as a beneficial approach. The aim of the TBLT is to help learners communicate clearly and with confidence. In Task-based language teaching, students are expected to take part, interact, and collaborate while performing tasks. To work cooperatively, students need to develop an understanding of the necessary abilities. When learners are actively involved in authentic language use within the classroom, they can acquire the language more effectively.

In Task Based Language Teaching, an Emphasis is laid on meaning as it gives learners opportunities to negotiate and communicate efficiently. This article endeavours and entrusts with the approach and its effectiveness for the development of communication.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language learning, endeavor, approach, communication, implementation.

### **Introduction**

Speaking is one of the main skills in a language. It plays a crucial part in the evolution of communication. Awareness of Task Based Language Teaching has been observed since the early 1980 as it focuses on meaning rather than form. Task Based Language Teaching delves on meaning and this approach is linked with authenticity (Skehan, 1996).

Multiple definitions of the term Task are as follows:

a) Prabhu (1987), who originally introduced Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), describes a task as an exercise where learners use provided information to reach a conclusion through a teacher-guided reasoning process(p. 17).

The learners execute a task to reach an objective using the target language.

b) Nunan(1989) explains a task is “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form.” (p.10)

c) Willis (1996) emphasizes that a task involves the learner using the target language for a communicative goal to accomplish a specific result(p. 23).

d) Samuda and Bygate(2008)define a task as “ a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some nonlinguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall goal of fostering language acquisition, either through methods or outcomes or a combination of both” (p.69)

e) Van den Branden (2006) defines Task as "A task is a language-driven activity designed to achieve a particular outcome”(p.4).

The above definition's objective is that a Task is a meaning-focused and goal-oriented activity that has been designed to enable learners to reach a desired outcome in language development. The idea which was put forth by Bygate, Skehan, and Swain(2001) advocated Task as "an activity that requires learners to use the activities in the target language, with an emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective”(p.11). By conducting activities in the target language, language learners participate in meaningful communication, convey messages, and become aware of an opportunity to enhance their communicative skills.

### **Features of a Task**

Ellis(2003) summarised his own definition of Task and pointed out that "tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use”(p.3). The critical features of a task have also been identified by Ellis(2003, pp. 9-10), which includes

- a) workplan
- b) Primary focus on meaning
- c) Language use in real-world processes
- d) Any four language skills can be involved
- e) Cognitive processes
- f) Clearly defined communicative outcome.

Likewise Shekan(1998,p.147) proposed five characteristics of a task are

- a) Meaning is of foremost importance.
- b) Learners are not given a chance to replicate other people’s meaning

- c) The task is associated with real-world activities.
- d) Importance is given to task completion.
- e) Evaluation of the Task is the end result.

The learners execute a task to reach an objective using the target language. Even the cultural elements and objects in teaching a foreign language will provide high adaptation and motivation (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Van den Branden (2006) proclaims that the objective of learners is to promote communication. Communication comes about in an environment where learners have an opportunity to exchange meaningful thoughts. To make it still precise, the implementation of tasks acts as an instrument for communication and language learning. Van den Branden (2006) advocates for the use of tasks to encourage learners to act as communicators, not language learners because TBLT considers language as a vehicle for communication. Wells (2000) prioritizes the use of language in a natural setting and argues that 'the organic application of the target language for all communication is a clear hallmark of an effective modern language program' (p.110). Hence, the use of language learning is very effective in learners' presentations.

Interaction plays a crucial role in language acquisition. According to Fotos (2002), tasks can provide learners with exposure to the target language that is rich in communicative instances of challenging structures. Engaging in tasks also gives learners opportunities for interaction that promotes language learning, specifically by allowing them to produce the target language and receive feedback on their performance. Fotos (p.138) emphasizes that feedback helps learners recognize the gap between their existing abilities and their desired level of proficiency, which enhances their chances of improvement.

#### **Characteristics of Task-Based Teaching**

Scrivener (2001) describes learning as a form of communicative language teaching (CLT) where learning revolves around the sequence of activities that involve preparing for completing and reflecting on tasks that mirror real-world skills and requirements. Feez (1998, p.17) indicates the key components of TBLT as:

- 1) The emphasis is on the method rather than the outcome.
- 2) Core components involve intentional exercises and assignments centered on interaction and significance.
- 3) Students acquire language skills through meaningful and interactive engagement during exercises and tasks.
- 4) Exercises can either reflect real-world goals or be designed for instructional purposes in a learning environment.
- 5) The activities in a task-oriented curriculum are arranged in order of challenge.
- 6) The challenge of an activity is influenced by factors like the learner's prior knowledge, the intricacy of the activity, the necessary language skills, and the amount of assistance provided.

The fundamental aspect of language learning is to engage learners in activities that help them in real communication(Mart,2012; Mart, 2017; Mart, 2019a). When learners conduct meaningful tasks, it allows them to use the target language, which leads to meaning communication(Mart,2018b). Tasks serve as key components in language learning, facilitating the learning process. Engaging learners in tasks gives them chances to discuss meaning and communicate efficiently. When learners are involved in task work, they focus their attention on comprehension, manipulation, and production(Nunan,1989). This type of interaction propels learners for forward learning. (Mart, 2020). Van den Branden(2006) declares that TBLT is student-centered, so learners actively benefit from language knowledge and take indispensable roles in self-instructed ways.

The five characteristics of TBLT listed by Nunan(1991,p.279) are as follows.

- a) A focus on developing communication skills by engaging with the language in real-life interactions.
- b) The use of genuine texts in the learning environment
- c) It offers learners chances to concentrate not just on the language itself but also on how they are learning it.
- d) Encouraging learners to draw from their personal experiences as valuable contributions to classroom learning.
- e) Aiming to connect language learning in the classroom with its practical use beyond the classroom.

In spite of enhancing interest in language learning, some criticism regarding TBLT has been put forth in terms of its potency in teaching language forms. Sato(2010) raised apprehension about the efficiency of the approach to the use of forms and asserts that "the effectiveness of TBLT, especially in teaching grammar, can be questioned"(p.191). Regardless, learners' focus should be on task completion, and priority should be given to executing tasks in a better way. This fact not only allows them to develop their problem-solving skills but also involves them in lexicalized communication(Skehan,2009).

The primary importance of language teaching is to bring form and meaning together.(Van Patten, 1990: Mart 2019b). While challenging to attain both at the same time, fluency and accuracy must be harmonized effectively to accomplish the intended objectives. (Skehan, 1996). Task-based activities are of primary importance as they help learners pay more attention to fluency and accuracy. When learners execute difficult tasks and face challenges, they can emphasize fluency rather than accuracy. (Skehan, 1996). The models of Task-based learning presented by Ellis(2003) and Willis(1996) show more attention to form than focus. Ellis(2003) presented a model of three stages, namely, pre-task, during-task, and post-task, and Willis(1996) also suggested a model with three stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus.

The two important elements of language learning are form and meaning.

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When learners perform activities, both form and meaning should be highlighted. In TBLT, the form takes second place but ensures that linguistic skills can be learned while performing the task. The practice provides opportunities for learners to learn the features of the language. Krahnke (1987) proclaims that TBLT promotes “communicative competence, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence”(p.59). When the process of the Task goes on, learners have the possibility of ensuring linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Krahnke(1987) describes that “strategic competence or the ability to use communicative strategies, is acquired through the need for understanding during the interaction required to accomplish the tasks”(p.59). At this juncture, learners practice the tasks by giving their opinions and exchanging ideas to reach the desired outcome in language learning.

**Advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching:**

- a) Spontaneous interaction: TBLT encourages learners to interact spontaneously, promoting natural language use.
- b) Grammar and vocabulary practice: Learners get the chance to try out the grammar and vocabulary they already know during tasks.
- c) Noticing language use: By listening to others, learners become more aware of the language they and others use.
- d) Developing communicative competence: TBLT provides an opportunity for learners to improve their ability to communicate effectively.
- e) Building confidence and ambition: Engaging in Task-based learning helps learners build self confidence and motivate them to achieve more.
- f) Developing automaticity: The use of language in real communication situations helps learners develop automaticity in language use.
- g) Enhancing vocabulary knowledge: TBLT enhances vocabulary knowledge, as learners need to practice language purposefully to meet task goals.
- h) Reinforcing vocabulary learning: Using language purposefully during tasks encourages learners to strengthen their vocabulary.

**Conclusion**

TBLT emphasizes learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. As a result, it is centred on meaning-based tasks, rather than focusing on language forms. The key principle of TBLT is that language learning happens best in a natural environment and greater language development occurs when learners participate in meaningful tasks using real-life materials. In TBLT, by engaging in tasks using the target language, learners take part in meaningful exchanges and have the chance to improve their communication skills.

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