
**TBLT – AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING LANGUAGE
SKILLS IN ELT CLASSROOM**

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Abstract

TBLT is an educational method that aims to involve students in using authentic language through a series of tasks, promoting interaction and involvement. It focuses on helping learners gain new linguistic knowledge and skills. The task-based approach in the English classroom is a widely used method that has shown to enhance learners' communicative competency. This approach involves planned tasks that require learners to use their thinking skills to arrive at an outcome using given information. The focus is on developing students' communicative competency rather than just their linguistic skills. The present article focuses on the need for improving language skills through task-based language activities.

Keywords: TBLT, English classroom, communication, language skills, interaction, culture, linguistic skills, etc.

Introduction

The English language is of vital significance and is regarded as the most essential of all subjects, primarily because language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening, are required to a lesser or greater degree for every student and, eventually, for everyone in their personal lives. Concurrently, acquiring English as the fundamental skill is a contentious and debatable topic. The English language endures numerous changes, and consequently, teaching English becomes a unique and energizing challenge. When it comes to teaching English to students whose mother tongue is prominent, the task becomes even more difficult. It becomes difficult to teach students another language, such as English, due in part to the negative attitude of the students towards learning English and in part to a lack of motivation. Students in India are typically bilingual or trilingual and conceal their capacity to contribute to their English learning. Due to the lack of clarity regarding

the purpose of English language acquisition, bilingual learners focus on special educational requirements rather than special linguistic needs and abilities. To demonstrate how difficult, it is to learn English, the culture, society, family, and educators must foster an environment characterized by motivation and a positive attitude towards English language acquisition.

There are four skills of language competency—listening, speaking, reading and writing. Also, all four language skills should be mentioned to be related and supportive. Many regard these skills as a natural ability, and for many it indeed is; for that reasons many feel that it can be taught and learned, and Sokolik (2003, p. 106) stated that this isn't his own opinion, but the dominant view. According to Sokolik (2003) there is some evidence that students try to improve their skills in communicating in English, but still they might not be able to perform their skills properly because they definitely are not a simple task. It takes a few years to be precise, efficient and quick in these skills. If the student is smart and talented and has other capabilities, his/her language skills are a thing that he/she should work on. It's a huge challenge for the native, as well as the non-native user! Some of these challenges may lead to the development of negative attitudes to these skills among the students. One can express their attitudes, values, perception, views etc. through the process of communication by expressing their feeling to others. Notwithstanding that, its complexity and difficulty is high. [

Attitude of Second Language Learners

The general attitude of second language learners, particularly undergraduates, towards learning English can vary widely based on a range of factors including their background, the context of learning, personal motivations, and previous experiences with the language. Many undergraduate students are highly motivated to learn English due to its global status as a lingua franca in business, science, technology, and academia. This motivation is often driven by career prospects, opportunities for higher education, and the desire to participate in global discourse.

However, learning a new language can also be daunting, and English is no exception. Students often feel anxious about making mistakes, especially in speaking and writing. This anxiety can stem from fear of judgment by peers or instructors, or from previous negative experiences in language learning. Despite these challenges, many students show a strong determination and commitment to improving their English skills. They recognize the practical benefits and opportunities that proficiency in English can bring, which fuels their perseverance despite the difficulties they might encounter.

Additionally, there's a curiosity and openness among many learners who are interested in the cultural aspects of language learning. They often view English not just as a subject to be mastered, but also as a doorway to understanding and involving with cultures different from their own. This cultural curiosity can enhance their learning experience, making it more involving and meaningful. Thus, while the attitudes of second language learners can be mixed, encompassing everything from enthusiasm and commitment to anxiety and apprehension, most learners recognize the significant benefits that proficiency in English can offer. Their attitudes are generally shaped by a combination of personal goals, cultural interest, and the practical demands of a globalized world.

TBLT – An Instructional Approach

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a teaching method that specifically involves students in meaningful activities set by tasks to develop their language learning to fulfill specific objectives or task completion. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)'s main goal is to develop students' interlanguage by providing them with a task they must resolve with the help of language (Skehan, 1989). An essay or common activities like talking on the phone are used to demonstrate some concepts or ideas. Furthermore, it has been reported that introducing Task Based Learning (TBL) tasks into the English language learning (ELL) context has a positive effect on students' language learning activity, and has shown significant progress in students' language skills development.

The individual levels of TBL have been designed to maximize pedagogical and interactional focus on the task to meet four key needs for effective second-language learning: exposure, motivational, language use, and language structure. Willis and Willis (1996) believe that it is a claim that "focuses on fluency as a basis for linguistic accuracy, implying that the variety of interaction produced is more beneficial for language learning than the linguistic structures used. The use of a language other than the usual CLA (Critical Language Awareness) approach provides students with the opportunity to use their own linguistic resources to access more vocabulary than a mere "slice of language" (Brown, 1994) when performing the task.

What is a Task

A task refers to an educational activity conducted within a classroom setting that involves students in various language-related tasks such as comprehension, manipulation, production, or interaction. During these tasks, students concentrate on utilising their grammatical knowledge to express meaning, with the primary objective being the transmission of meaning rather than the manipulation of linguistic form.

Furthermore, it is essential for the task to possess a sense of fulfilment and be capable of functioning independently as a communication act. According to Nunan (2004),

A task can be defined as (1) an activity or exercise conducted in a classroom setting that involves (a) a specific objective that can only be achieved through interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for organizing and ordering this interaction, and (c) a primary emphasis on the exchange of meaningful information; (2) an undertaking in language learning that necessitates learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or generate the target language while executing a predetermined set of work plans.

Skehan (1996) proposes five additional principles for task-based education.

1. Select a variety of target structures
2. Select tasks that foster optimal conditions for learning.
3. Select and sequence tasks to accomplish balanced growth. [(i) appropriately challenging; (ii) balanced between fluency, accuracy, and complexity]
4. Increase the likelihood of an emphasis on form within the context of meaningful language use
5. Employ accountability cycles and require learners to self-evaluate frequently.

The primary goal of language classrooms is to actively involve and maintain student participation in the process of acquiring knowledge. Instructional tasks play a vital role within the language learning environment, as they are considered to be a fundamental component of the learning process (Ellis, 2003, p. 46). The influence of the instructional task type on student performance may be good. Hence, the curriculum or course designer endeavours to provide tasks that foster a language-learning environment wherein learners can actively participate and get assistance in their endeavours to speak with fluency and efficacy (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). Task-Based Instruction (TBI) offers a valuable chance to incorporate impactful and purposeful tasks, hence promoting the use of expressive language in the language learning environment.

Task-based Instruction

Task-based instruction can be defined as the teaching and learning approach that provides a communicative context for learning, and requires students to use a target language. In this type of approach, there is not only focus on the production of correct language forms but also on language usage. By focusing on functional communicative language use, task-based instruction (TBI) is considered as a plausible method of language instruction in contrast to traditional methods of language teaching (Brumfit, 1982; Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). Knowledge acquisition

by itself is not sufficient; it needs to be well applied in real life situations. A task is defined by Martin (1987) as an educational activity that requires students to apply learning knowledge in the problem-solving process to produce an answer or result. This activity also allows instructors to supervise and facilitate the students' thinking processes. As defined by Prabhu's study done in 1987, A task means an educational task that is carried out within the classroom boundaries. Tasks can be readily related to language needs of pupils.

The use of a task-based strategy is associated with an increased likelihood of fostering intrinsic motivation among pupils. Within the educational setting, classroom tasks play a crucial role in facilitating both interaction among students and the acquisition of language skills. The approach is characterized by a greater emphasis on learner-centeredness, in addition to being centred around the process of learning. Speaking tasks are advantageous for practicing the target language in a communicative manner. According to Brumfit (1984), the development of fluency in speaking classes can be facilitated by the implementation of communicative tasks, while the enhancement of accuracy can be fostered through the utilization of these pedagogical tasks.

Speaking refers to the proficient utilization of linguistic knowledge for the purpose of engaging in interactions, conducting transactions, and facilitating communication through the use of verbal expressions. A review of teaching materials suggests that the development of graduates' key oral communication abilities is mostly achieved through explanations, as opposed to tasks or task-based activities. Hence, it is crucial to prioritize the enhancement of English oral communication skills among graduates through task-based and contextually grounded instructional approaches. It is imperative that young children possess the ability to provide successful and confident presentations on a diverse range of subjects in a classroom setting. Additionally, they should actively engage in group discussions and have proficient English communication skills.

Generally, for the higher school students, the tasks will be selected based on the learning style, interests, and specific requirements of the students. With the aid of appropriate task-based activities, it is hypothesized that these school students will enhance their English language fluency.

- 1- Syllabus designers and textbook authors should become aware of the use of tasks to aid English language learners in speaking the language.
- 2- If students are taught with contextually relevant supplementary materials that blend their day-to-day life in a village/rural area, culture, tradition, etc., with corporate (job-

oriented) tasks and activities that are interesting to them, their speaking skills will be enhanced.

Textbook authors may benefit from an emphasis on the effective use of task-based speaking activities with higher school students from rural areas. As a remedy for the lack of speaking skills among rural students, the designed material of the researcher would consist solely of task-based speaking activities from online resources.

When it comes to improving students' public speaking abilities, Task-Based Learning has a profound impact. Students can hone their communication skills while they complete their assigned tasks in TBL. It is recommended that students use English when completing, planning, and presenting their assignments. Students' ability to communicate in English is enhanced through classroom task-based exercises. The focus is on understanding how to construct meaning rather than memorizing rules of grammar. This implies that students can speak freely without being constantly corrected on grammar, which can improve their fluency. TBL's incorporation of authentic, real-world tasks might further inspire learners to actively engage in conversation in the target language. Students that are highly motivated to learn and increase their English language skills naturally do so. Therefore, task-based learning is an efficient means of improving spoken communication.

English proficiency is currently a requirement for employment in industries, businesses, the corporate sector, and academic institutions. Learners are well aware of the increased demand for proficient English communicators. The inability to communicate effectively in English is one of the leading causes of miserable failure to create an influence on the worldwide market. Communicative proficiency in any language cannot be acquired in a short period of time, and language acquisition is not comparable to the construction of a wall, but to the growing of a plant. The significance of strengthening English communication skills can no longer be overlooked. Therefore, relevant techniques and educational tactics must be developed to promote the communicative skills of students across all disciplines.

Widdowson (1978) believes the ultimate objective of language learning is to acquire communicative competence. Tickoo (2009) described a good communicator as one who selects the best communicative methods to convey his message and to elicit the desired responses. Clearly, meaning must prevail in all of that. But there can be no doubt; right and correct language could certainly improve the response mechanism. Therefore, a good course should focus on accuracy as well as fluency, minimize risk-taking when accuracy is being acquired or correct habits and skills are

being established, and, especially at the intermediate or advanced level, promote and encourage risk-taking to make communication natural and efficient. [

Task-based learning activities offer effective ways to enhance students' language development by providing them with real-life language learning experiences in various classroom situations. Task-based learning provides students with a chance to actively participate in language usage. The main emphasis of a classroom activity is the task seen as a means to involve students in natural language practice. The task activities assigned to the students provide them with the chance to utilize language in order to accomplish a particular objective.

The activity encourages students to consider real-life situations and to carefully consider the meanings of the words they choose. Tasks serve various purposes and therefore have different definitions in scholarly literature. Long tasks encompass various everyday activities, including painting a fence, buying shoes, finding a street address, and making hotel reservations.

In the 1950s, tasks were utilised for instructional purposes in vocational training. In this application, the tasks at hand are carefully examined, adjusted to fit the needs of teaching, meticulously crafted as instructional aids, and organized in a logical sequence for classroom instruction. In the early 1970s, tasks began to be utilised for academic purposes, building upon their established role as tools for vocational training. Academic tasks encompass four different dimensions. These include student products, the operations needed to create them, the cognitive skills necessary to complete the tasks, and a system for evaluating the products. Task-based language instruction shares many similarities with tasks designed for other academic purposes.

In the field of language education, there have been previous attempts to implement TBI concepts, such as the Malaysian Communicational Syllabus and the Bangalore Project. The tasks utilised in the Bangalore Project consisted of two categories: practical, real-life tasks and academic tasks. The tasks were centred around five different oral interaction situations: basic interactions, informal face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, interviews, and service meetings. Task types included various activities such as role-plays, brainstorming, ordering, and problem solving.

Benefits of Task-Based Approach

The Task-Based Approach to language learning offers numerous benefits that focus on the learner's needs and preferences, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. By centering activities around the

learner's interests, this approach not only fosters a sense of enthusiasm and involvement but also enhances creativity as students plan their own activities and use the target language in real-life situations. This methodology transforms the classroom into a dynamic environment where the language serves as a practical tool for communication, rather than merely being the subject of study.

Learners are encouraged to use the language spontaneously, which builds their confidence and allows for the natural development of communication skills, accepting errors as a normal part of learning. This fluency-oriented method helps students achieve their learning goals and provides them with a platform to express their thoughts freely and reflectively. Consequently, writing tasks become more involving and thought-provoking, significantly improving students' ability to write coherently and creatively.

Teachers play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of writing tasks by contextualizing instructions to give them meaning and purpose, as noted by Hedge (1988). Exposure to various writing styles and genres is critical for developing robust writing skills. Classrooms should be designed to encourage the creation of relevant and interconnected content, where feedback and corrections are part of a collaborative process involving peers as well as teachers. This collaborative environment also supports the organization of activities that familiarize learners with every stage of the writing process, from planning to drafting to revision, ensuring they have sufficient time to thoroughly involve with the tasks.

Thus, the Task-Based Approach is designed to inspire and involve students at all levels by offering a wide range of learning opportunities, making it an effective strategy for language acquisition in diverse educational settings.

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