



Task- Based Language Teaching to Improve The Skill Of Communication

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Abstract

Task- based language Teaching indicates an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan and Swan 2001). This paper tries to explore the nature, principles and types of tasks to improve learner's skill of communication consistent with its framework. Task- based language teaching approach presents multiple tasks which help the learners to use target language in a relaxed language rich environment. It is believed that when students learn language through accomplishing a task they will get really motivated. Maintaining suitable levels of motivation supports the process of language learning and will make it much more productive.

Keywords: Task- based language Teaching, Communicative Competence

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INTRODUCTION

Task- based language teaching (TBLT), which is a subcategory of communicative approach, is one of the most important methodologies in English teaching. This approach has gained acceptance from researchers and teachers from different teaching fields. TBLT was developed in 1980s under the influence of communicative language teaching and hence, the notion of *task* also derived from communicative approach (Branden, 2006). Task-based instruction puts much emphasis on the authentic use of language giving importance to fluency rather than accuracy.

TBLT presents opportunities for the students to actively engage in communication in order to accomplish a goal or complete the task. This approach is based on the assumption that accuracy is required after fluency. Through TBLT which stands with task, it is expected that students have more chances to build their language and can improve the skill of communication. A task is a piece of work or activity with a specified objective, It can be written or oral. A task requires the participants to function primarily as *language users* in the sense that they must employ the same kinds of communicative processes as those involved in real world activities. In contrast, an exercise requires the participants to function primarily as learners, here learning is intentional. Furthermore, TBLT is an approach to language teaching organized around tasks rather than language structures.

THE NATURE OF TASK BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

According to Ellis (2003), TBLT concentrates on the practical use of the target language by making students use the language. Therefore, a typical TBLT class always tries to focus on completing the tasks (Ellis,2003).

- The language is used rather than being learned, and also, there is a must to focus on meaning.
- Tasks must involve a certain level of gaps, for example, the information gap, reasoning gap or opinion gap.

A task involves a plan for learner activity. This plan includes activities which motivate the students to use the target language in real life situation. The task mainly focus on meaning and it can be used to practice any of the four skills in language learning. One thing that we ensure while planning the task is that it should have a clearly defined communicative outcome. Learners should be given opportunity to use their linguistic and nonlinguistic resources to complete the task. The principle of scaffolding should be followed while practicing TBLT in the classroom. At the initial stage we can place the educator inside the learning circle, providing orientation regarding the task. The practitioners also follow the principle of dependency which ensures the meaningful connection between tasks. The recycling principle of language helps the students to use the learned structures in closely related contexts. The principle of active learning and the systematic integration of linguistic, semantic and communicative function reinforces the learning process. Stories, role play, puzzle of various kinds, real life tasks etc. were used in the classroom to achieve the objective. Classroom activities were initiated to make the learners think logically.

In a framework for TBLT, Jane Willis (1996) suggests a three stage process-pre-task, task cycle and language focus: *The pre-task phase* introduces the topic and tasks for the students and activates topic related words and phrases. It is like a warm up activity. Students get a chance to recall things that they know and the teacher then tells what will be expected of them at this stage. The teacher may highlight new language structures to draw attention to certain phrases or expressions and perhaps present a model of the task by showing a picture audio or video that demonstrate it, at the same time trying to elicit appropriate vocabulary or phrases which students might find useful.

The next step is *task cycle* and it has three stages within; *task, planning and report*. In task stage, the students perform the task, it can be pair work or small group activities. The students practice the task in a language rich environment are free to exercise the task without teachers' compulsion. Mistakes are no matter the students are free to use the target language. In the planning stages, students prepare the report how they did the task and what they discover to the whole classes, they can present it orally or in written form. The last is report. Report is the part of students presenting the result of their discussion. At the report stage, students present their findings and here the teachers' role is to act as a chairperson and to summarize each students' work and make comments. The report stage is crucial as it gives students added motivation to complete the task.

Language Focus is the final stage and it allows closer study of some of the specific features naturally occurring in the language used during the task cycle. This stage focuses on two parts:

analysis and practice. The analysis involves the teacher focussing on some language structures or grammatical issues related to the tasks that students are addressing. Students here can also do practice with special focus on language issues. Here the students develop the drive to communicate their ideas which provides motivation to learn the language.

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Chomsky (1965) coined the term linguistic competence, which was explained as producing grammatically accurate utterances. However linguists later disagreed by arguing that the ability to communicate effectively cannot be measured narrowly via competence in linguistics. Since then numerous scholars in the world of linguistics have tried to redefine the term communicative competence. Finally LittleWood (2001) structuralized communicative competence in four factors, involving (1) linguistic competence (2) sociolinguistic competence (3) Pragmatic competence and (4) Discourse competence. Language doesn't exist in a vacuum. The materials used in the learning environment should encourage the pupil to focus on meanings in context first and subsequently seeks to consider the wordings that realize the meanings. Above all the teacher should possess a clear idea of what kind of tasks, whether focus on form or not and the extent of difficulty while performing the task. So meaningful tasks should be provided to the students through classroom interaction and real world targets. N. S. Prabhu, the Indian scholar suggests three basic types of tasks that can be practiced in classrooms to achieve proficiency in language skills: Information gap, Reasoning gap and Opinion gap activities.

- The activities which creates situations in which the participants have to transfer information from one person to another, from one form to another or from one place to another to complete the assigned task. Such activities come under information gap activities.
- Reasoning gap activities help the pupil to derive, comprehend and convey information. The learners are asked to use their thinking skills to analyze the situation and are asked to generate ideas to arrive at a solution.
- Opinion gap activities are those that ask learners to convey their own personal preferences, feelings or ideas about a particular situation.

The teacher should have a clear idea regarding the task, the students' previous knowledge and the expected learning environment to carry out the task. The students should possess a clear idea regarding the purpose of the activity and what is expected from them. Most often TBLT classroom practices collaborative learning. It should be ensured that the students are actively

participating in the activities. Learners work and interact with each other in groups. The teacher can practice brainstorming, problem solving, sharing experience etc. which will in turn motivate the students to express their ideas. By practicing these communicative activities the students will get a chance to integrate the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. When learners are engaged in meaningful task, they are expected to share information among themselves in their groups or with the teacher. This type of group activities ensures the participation of all the students and at the same time they can float from one group to another and can share their ideas. Again meaningful tasks are rehearsed in class to use in real communicative circumstances outside the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Task-based language teaching is an important term related with second language pedagogy and has involved practices that are designed in modern educational context. Learning should take place in a relaxed atmosphere so that students can explore knowledge by practicing interactive techniques inside the classroom. Present curriculum demands cooperative learning atmosphere to promote second language acquisition. Through different types of discourses, the constructivist curriculum intends to fix the priority upon fluency in language rather than accuracy. Tasks provides learners with thorough exposure to the target language. A constructivist teacher can implement well designed tasks to achieve remarkable learning outcomes.

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