



The Use of Task Based Learning in the Language Classroom: An Overview

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Abstract

Research has largely endorsed the utilization of tasks in the context of second language acquisition. The focus of task-based learning is on meaning; thus, the implementation of tasks promotes communication and language acquisition. The use of language for communication is believed to be the most efficient way for language learning. While working on tasks, students have opportunities to utilise the target language in understanding and communicating with their teacher and classmates. It is important to encourage students to use the target language for the development of learning. This paper tries to explore the advantages of employing task based learning in language classroom.

Keywords: Task Based Learning, Communication, Language Learning, Meaning

Introduction

Tasks are being considered as a major aspect of language classroom because they create more effective settings for prompting learner acquisition process and fostering L2 learning. Since the early 1980s, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has drawn attention because of its crucial contribution to the growth of the communicative approach. Prabhu (1987), who pioneered task-based learning, thinks that if students concentrate on the task, they would learn the target language with greater efficiency. Similar to the aforementioned, the most effective way to teach a foreign language is to immerse students in actual language usage, which is accomplished by creating projects like discussions, challenges, games, etc. (Willis & Willis, 2007). An activity that necessarily incorporates language is described as a task that has an important role in the teaching of foreign languages. In simpler terms, task work gives language learners better chances to utilise the language as a tool. The chief objective of selecting Task based learning is to enhance learner engagement. The primary focus of TBL is on the learner, rather than the teacher, hence it is the teacher's responsibility to create and provide various assignments that will allow the learner with the chance to experiment on their own. Each task will provide the

student more chances to use the foreign language on their own because task based learning creates a setting for learning by doing.

Literature Review

A task-based lesson frequently grants the student a voice in planning the activities and taking part in them, which strengthens their motivation to learn. According to Prabhu (1987), a task is an activity in which students employ a thinking process to create an output from data, and which requires that teachers control the thought process. A task is a piece of classroom work that requires students to comprehend, manipulate, produce, or interact in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form, according to Nunan (1989). Breen (1987) states that language tasks may be seen as a variety of work assignments, ranging from easy to difficult, with the ultimate goal of supporting language learning. The aforementioned definitions underscore the idea that task-based learning places a strong focus on meaning. As meaning is highlighted in Task based learning, this method is associated with authenticity (Skehan, 1996). Learners must use the target language to complete a task because it has a clearly defined goal. Language learning occurs in a natural learning environment, and when students are involved in worthwhile activities using real materials, language acquisition is promoted more effectively. Richards and Rodgers (2004) argue that “engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes (p. 223). Willis (1996) emphasises the impact of task on communication effectiveness and defines it as an activity “where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome” (p. 23).

As defined by Lee (2000), a task has a goal that can only be attained by participant interaction, a system for organising and sequencing engagement, and a concentration on meaning exchange. Language learners may communicate messages and enhance their conversational abilities by completing a series of tasks. Students engage in meaningful conversation to accomplish a goal, which promotes greater language development. Under the guidance of the teacher, task-based learning gives students the opportunity to make use of the target language to advance their language ability. The student sets himself or herself in an authentic setting where verbal interaction is required to complete the task in task-based learning. A task is an activity where the learner uses the target language for communication in order to accomplish a goal. It is possible to say that the purpose of tasks is to provide students a genuine reason for using language in communicative interactions.

Ellis (2003) argues that “tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use” (p. 3). Furthermore, Ellis (2003, pp. 9-10) has identified the essential characteristics of a task:

- 1) A task is a workplan

- 2) A task involves primary focus on meaning
- 3) A task involves real-world processes of language use
- 4) A task can involve any of the four language skills
- 5) A task engages cognitive processes
- 6) A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome

It is worth mentioning that task based learning focuses on communicating in the target language through conversation. Students stand a better chance of learning through the inclusion of real texts in the educational setting. Task-based instruction gives students the chance to concentrate on both language and the learning process. The learner's own experiences are enhanced through task-based learning as significant aspects of classroom learning. Furthermore, it aims to connect language learning in the classroom with language use outside of it.

Similarly, Shekan (1998, p. 147) offers the following five qualities of a task:

- 1) Meaning is of paramount importance
- 2) Learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate
- 3) Task has a relationship with real world activities
- 4) Task completion has significance
- 5) The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome

Richards and Rodgers (2004) suggest that processes of negotiation, adaptation, rephrasing, and experimenting that are at the core of second language learning are thought to be fostered by tasks. The main focus of language instruction should be the use of natural or naturalistic language. Furthermore, learner-centeredness should be promoted during instruction more than teacher control. Pre- or post-task language learning that which could aid acquisition by promoting or enhancing awareness of formal elements in conversation may be useful.

Feez (1998, p. 17) lists the essential components of TBLT as:

- 1) Process receives priority over output
- 2) Purposeful actions and activities that stress communication and meaning are essential elements
- 3) By collaborating communicatively and meaningfully while performing the tasks and activities, language learners acquire new vocabulary
- 4) Activities and tasks might either be ones that students may need to complete in the real world or ones that have a pedagogical purpose particular to the classroom
- 5) A task-based syllabus's activities and assignments are organised in order of increasing complexity

- 6) A task's difficulty may depend on a number of variables, such as the learner's prior experience, the activity's complexity, the language needed to complete the task, and the level of help offered

According to Van den Branden (2006), using tasks encourages students to act as language users rather than language learners, hence TBLT sees language as a tool for improving communication. Wells (2000) stresses language usage in a natural environment and maintains that "the natural use of the target language for all communication is a sure sign of a good modern language course" (p. 110). The cornerstone of language learning is getting students involved in activities that encompass real conversation (Mart, 2012; Mart, 2017; Mart, 2018; Mart, 2019). Fotos (2002) points out that a "task can supply the learner with target language input that is rich in communicative usages of problematic target structures, and task performance provides opportunities for the type of learner interaction suggested to promote language acquisition; that is opportunities to produce the target language and receive feedback on the productions" (p.138). Tasks can serve as building blocks for language acquisition. Immersing students in tasks provides them the chance to successfully convey and negotiate meaning. Interaction among students in the target language increases student learning (Mart, 2020).

Task based learning received criticism despite its growing interest in language acquisition. Students will keep using the words they already know while working on tasks, therefore, the teacher must assist students in developing them. Otherwise, students won't pick up new vocabulary or phrases on their own. Students also have a greater chance of discovering the language others use while listening to them, which gives them the possibility to improve their communicative skills. Task based learning has the potential to increase learners' automaticity. Moreover, the success of the method on the usage of forms has been questioned by Sato (2010). There is some attention to form in the task-based learning models of Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996), but it is not the approach's main focus. Pre-task, during-task, and post-task are the three stages of the model Ellis (2003) proposed. Similarly, a model with three stages—pre-task, task cycle, and linguistic focus—was also proposed by Willis (1996). Language difficulties that students may encounter are reduced if teachers prepare the grammatical structures and vocabulary that students will need to complete their activities in the pre-task stage. In language learning, it is crucial to integrate form with meaning. Fluency and accuracy must be appropriately paired in order to accomplish the intended goals, even if it is challenging to acquire them at the same time. To allow students to provide balanced attention to fluency and accuracy, the selection of task-based activities is crucial.

Conclusion

A task is made up of the instructions or guidelines that the instructor provides

students with in order to study. The core assumption of Task based learning is that language learning occurs in a natural learning environment and that when learners are exposed to useful tasks through the use of real materials, language acquisition occurs at a faster pace. The focus of the learning process can be moved from the instructor to the student with the help of task-based learning. It offers the learner a new perspective on language as a tool rather than as a means of achieving a certain objective. It can help teachers move lessons from abstract information to applications in the real world. A task is useful in achieving the learners' immediate requirements and offers a framework for designing engaging lessons.

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