

A Study of TBLT Approach: An Experiment of Sample Lesson and Preparing Lesson Plan for EFL Classroom

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Abstract- *The implication of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English teaching continues to draw attention of language Teachers and Researchers. This study explores how task-based language teaching approach can be implemented for the colleges under National University in Bangladesh. An experiment was conducted to discover 42 students' participation of a college under National University about the implication of TBLT method and uncovered the factors affecting the implementation of TBLT in the classroom. By observing two departments, this study also examined how intended method was appropriate for tertiary level to develop their ability to use English in an all-round way. The results of the experiment imply that by applying TBLT students will be able to exchange information effectively through both spoken and written channels, and at the same time will be able to enhance their ability to study independently.*

Key words: *Task, monitoring, input, feedback, action point etc.*

Introduction

TBLT has slowly emerged since 1980 to challenge the traditional itemized form-based methodology. TBLT is becoming a catchword in the English teaching circle. What is this new TBLT approach about? David Nunan mentions, "setting specific tasks for students so that they act as if they were using the language in real life—this is part of the essence of task-based teaching" (Lu Chun-hua, 2004). According to Nunan, the traditional approach of breaking down the different parts of a foreign language and then teaching them separately step by step do not help students to generate meaningful language. What is the model of organizing lessons of TBLT and principles of communicative tasks design? Each element will be analyzed particularly [1].

Task based Language teaching approach can be effective in teaching for honors classes -where they have a course entitled "non credit English Course". TBLT can promote learners' competence in using the language to do things they need to do. It offers a change from the traditional teaching routines through which many learners had previously failed to communicate with the lessons. It encourages learners to experiment with whatever English pieces they can recall, to try things out without fear of failure, to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy [2].

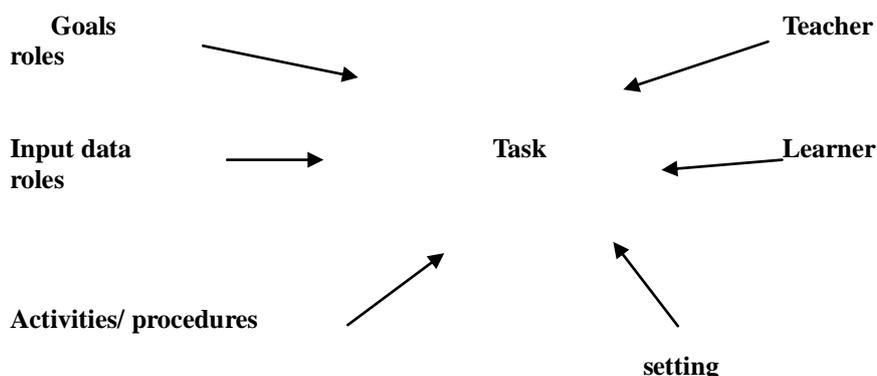
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Task Based Learning

TBLT has increasingly achieved popularity in recent years and has been recommended as a way forward in ELT. Various influential experts, Prabhu (1987), Nunan (1989), Willis(1996) and their definitions on tasks are presented in a chronological order as follows:

Prabhu stands as the first significant person in the development of TBLT. He defines task as "an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (p.24) [3].

Nunan (1989) uses the word ‘task’ instead of ‘activity’. He defines a task as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (p.10) In 1989, Nunan published *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. In his book, he proposed a framework for analyzing communicative tasks and those tasks are analyzed or categorized according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles [4].



*Figure 1: Key components of Tasks Task
(Adapted from Nunan 1989/2000-11)*

Willis (1996) is another figure who contributes to the use of tasks in language classroom. According to Willis (1996) “tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome” [5].

Shavelson and Stern (1981:478) suggest that tasks design should take into consideration the following elements:

1. Content--the subject matter to be taught

2. Materials--the things that learners can observe/manipulate
3. Activities--the things the learners and teacher will be doing during the lesson
4. Goals--the teacher's general aim for the task
5. Students--their abilities, needs and interests are important.
6. Social community--the class as a whole and its sense of “groupness” [6].

Candlin (1987) suggests that tasks should contain inputs, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback [7].

Long (1989) discusses two commonly aspects of communication tasks—the distribution of task-essential information and the goal orientation of learners [8].

Yule (1997) provides a second typology of communication tasks. Yule’s (1997) typology provides a basis for sequencing tasks developmentally.

Lambert (2004) introduces an approach on planning sequences of communication tasks that require to become personally involved in their learning. Lambert’s idea intended to increase understanding of the potential of tasks as a planning tool in FL/L2 education, and to provide practical examples for teachers and materials designers [9].

What is Task-Based Teaching Design Like?

The design of a task –based lesson involves consideration of the stages or components of a lesson that has a task as its principal component.

1. Pre-task	it concerns the various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they start the task
2. During - task	it centers around the task itself and various instructional options.
3. Post-task	it involves procedures for following up on the task performance

How Should a Lesson Be Designed Guided By Task-Based Teaching

The researcher would like to use the framework for designing the task-based lessons and her teaching experience to demonstrate her ideas.

Framework for Designing Task-Based Lessons

Phase	Examples of options
A pre-task	Framing the activity Planning time Doing a similar task
B during -task	Time pressure Number of participants
C post-task	Learner report Consciousness raising Repeat task

Now the researcher will use the lesson once she used in the task-based teaching in designing as the example to illustrate. The lesson is extracted from a newspaper article- titled “No Drug”

The task of the lesson is to read to a conversation between an interviewer and a journalist about the danger of taking drugs and asking students to conduct a report and make another interview to realize the relation between drugs and crimes and call on them to stay away from drugs. It is designed as follows:

(1) The Pre-task Phase

The purpose is to prepare the students to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition. We know it is very important to present a task in a way that motivates learners.

(2) The During-task Phase.

The methodological options available to the teachers in the during-task phase are of two basic kinds. First, there are various options relating to how the task is to be undertaken. Second, there are a number of “process options” that involve the teacher and students in online decision making about how to perform the task as it is being completed.

(3) The Post-task Phase

The post-task phase affords a number of options. These have three major pedagogic goals:

1. to provide an opportunity for a repeated performance of the task
2. to encourage reflection on how the task was performed
3. to encourage attention to form, in particular to those forms that proved problematic to the learners when they performed the task.

A Framework for Task-Based Learning

Historically, task based learning seems to have gained currency since 1996 with the publication of Jane Willis's **A Framework for Task-Based Learning** (Longman) and her paper *A flexible framework for task-based learning*, published in Willis J. & Willis D. (ed) *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching* (Macmillan Heinemann) [10].

The task based lesson, based on her framework, is structured as follows:

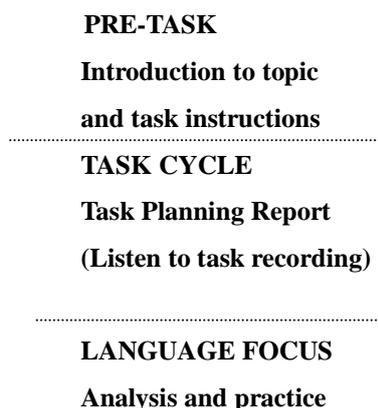


Figure -2: Framework of TBLT (Willis 1996)

The aim of the task based learning framework is to create the optimum conditions for language learning. Willis (1998, p3) identifies these three essential conditions as [11]:

- Exposure to the target language
- Opportunities to use the target language for expressing meaning
- Motivation to engage with exposure and use what they know.

A fourth desirable condition is:

- Focus on language form to prevent fossilization

A Brief Description of The Task-Based Lesson

Pre-task

This serves as an introduction to the topic and task.

The Task Cycle

This cycle has three essential phases and one further optional phase.

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a. Task

A task is a goal-oriented activity in which learners achieve a real outcome. According to Willis, (1996, pp 26-28), there are six main types of tasks[12]:

1. Listing
2. Ordering and sorting
3. Comparing
4. Problem solving
5. Sharing personal experiences
6. Creative tasks

b. Planning

Having completed the task, students prepare report on the outcome. Now the emphasis is on organization and accuracy. The teacher advises students on language and helps them correct any errors they make during this phase.

c. Report

Some or all of the groups report briefly to the whole class. The others listen in order to compare findings or conduct a survey. The teacher may rephrase but not correct the language.

d. Optional post task listening

This phase allows students to listen to native speakers doing the same task and to compare the language

Language Focus Analysis

Learners focus on form and ask questions about language features.

Practice

Teacher conducts activities based on the analysis work or examples from the text or transcript.

These conditions: exposure to real language, opportunities for real use of language, motivation and focus on language are provided for at each phase of the task based learning framework as illustrated by Willis (1996, p60) [13]:

PRE-TASK

Exposure ----- Introduction to topic
and task instructions

TASK CYCLE

Use & exposure ----- Task
Focus on form----- Planning ----- feedback
Use & exposure ----- Report ----- feedback
Exposure ----- (Listen to task recording)

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Exposure ----- Analysis
Focus on form----- Practice ----- feedback

Experiment of Sample Lessons for TBLT Classroom

The researchers have used one of the sample lessons used for the task based language teaching classroom [14]. The paragraph for the lesson is extracted from a previous year's questions paper. The task of the lesson is to read paragraph about "Transportation problem" in Dhaka city and ask the students to do report for a newspaper, design a poster, make an interview of the minister and to practice some other activities:

- a. While observing the class the researchers have evaluated the reaction of the students to the class by noting the quality of their engagement with the task and with each other [15]. The researchers have given their observation tasks relating to the language the learners use during the task cycle. The learners were given a questionnaire after the class, in order to ascertain how they felt about it and to gain some insight into their reaction to a task based lesson. They were asked if they found the class interesting, if the class gave them the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking. The researchers have also sought their opinion regarding the class's usefulness with reference to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation [16]. Finally, they were asked what they liked and disliked about the class.
- b. During the task phase of the task cycle, the researchers didn't interfere in their discussion of the students.
- c. Particular attention was paid by the researchers to increase in accuracy as the students move from the task to the planning and reporting phases.
- d. The researchers noted what type of questions came from the learners regarding form. They evaluated the answers to such questions.

LESSON PLAN AND DETAILED PLAN OF TBLT

Lesson Plan

Date	01-08-2006
Time	60 Minutes
Level	Tertiary
Profile Learning	There are average 42 students in each class. All of them have compulsory English course in 2 nd Year Honours of Accounting Department in Siddeshwari Girls College. There is an atmosphere among the students. All of them want to improve their job prospects by improving four skills in English. They enjoy pair and group work, classroom discussion and debates.
Learners' need	The learners need to be able to communicate fluently and accurately outside the classroom . They need to understand the language as it is spoken. They also need to improve their writing skills. The class provides them with the skills and confidence to use their language in everyday interactions.
Aims	By the end of the lesson learners will have had the opportunity to complete the task of reading, discussing, and summarizing a paragraph or a newspaper article. They will also know how to write a report, make a poster, design an advertisement, prepare a resume for the job etc. They will have listen to a fluent speaker does a similar task. Having focused on and analyzed his language they will have been given the opportunity to practice the language and go back into the task cycle and do a similar task.
Main focus	To make them practice four skills.
Language Analyses	The paragraphs or newspaper articles give the students opportunities to make reports and summaries. While reporting what someone said, the verb form usually moves from one tense into the past.
Assumption	Assumption is that the language in the articles or paragraphs will present the problems of the students.
Anticipate problem and solution	P: Students will not find the task interesting. S: Stimulate interest during the per-task stage. P: Students will get stuck during the first phase of the task. S: Tell them in advance that I am not going to help them. P: The student won't have enough time. S: Be realistic about timing in the lesson plan.
Materials/ Resources	Collecting composition and paragraph from the previous years question papers; newspaper articles; dialogues extracted from dramas etc.
Person aims	To teach a pure task based class. To give students the time to complete the task without interference from the teacher. To see if the student can cope with unpredicted question on the form. To increase the researchers' understanding of how to teach task based lesson.

Detailed Plan

Stage	Aims	Procedure	Interaction	Time
Pre-task	To introduce the topic	Ask students to look at headlines and to guess what the articles or paragraphs are about	Pairs.T monitors	5-15 Mins
Task	Students read an article and answer three questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give each group an article or a paragraph • Ask them to read it carefully. • Ask each other about any unfamiliar words • Answer the following questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the article or a paragraph about? b. What are the most important claims made in the article or paragraph? c. Think of one interesting question arising from the article that you would like to discuss with fellow students. 		
Planning	Students write out their answers	Ask students to summarize their answer in writing. They may ask to help them express their answers	Pairs.T Monitors and makes suggestion	15-25 Mins
Report	Students read out their answers to the rest of the class	Each pair reports to the whole class. Other students listen and may ask questions	Whole Class	25-28Mins
Listening	To hear a fluent speaker like talk about a similar article or paragraph	Ask student to listen carefully to a fluent speaker summarizing a newspaper articles or a paragraph. Report it once without transcript. Distribute transcript and repeat it again.	Whole Class	28-32 Mins
Analysis	To draw the students attention on the aspects of the native speaker's language	Ask students to identify any words or phrases in the transcript which might be useful in summarizing their own article	Pairs	32-40 Mins
Practices T>P> R	To give students the opportunity to do the task again & incorporate new forms.	Ask the students to do report for the newspaper, design a poster, make an interview of the Minister and to practice some other activities based on this paragraph	Pairs	40-60 Mins

Post-Lesson Evaluation of the Experiment

Following the Willis model, the researchers did not help them during the task phase of the task cycle. The students were left alone to use whatever language they had to do the task. As they moved on to the planning phase, the researchers could see how they put some thought into expressing their ideas. During this phase, they could ask her for help and suggestions. Most of the students took advantage of this, although some used dictionaries. They presented their answers to the three questions during the reporting phase. However, the researchers now realize that they have compromised the objective of the planning and reporting phases, i.e. the movement toward greater accuracy, by not giving enough clear instructions. They omitted to tell students that they would not interrupt their reports. As a result, the students did not actually use summarizing language as frequently as she had hoped.

There was good overall fluency during the task cycle. It was felt at the time that the learners' language was more accurate as the cycle progressed. However, during the reporting phase, the researchers or the teachers were prompting the students who were making the report. They had not made it sufficiently clear to the students that they would have to prepare a written report and read it out to the class. The researchers can see how a teacher could mistakenly conclude that the task cycle does not work, as there did not seem to be a significant qualitative difference between the learners' language at the start and at the end of the cycle.

In retrospect, the researchers realize that it may have been more appropriate to state discourse (the language of summarizing) as the lesson's main aim because grammar was only going to be a supporting aim [17]. They invited the learners to focus onwards or phrases in the native speaker's summary, which might have been useful in doing their task. They successfully identified the appropriate language but did not ask questions about form. The researchers feel that they did the students a disservice by not spending time on a practice activity. Instead, they re-entered the task cycle without having spent sufficient time focusing on and practicing the new language.

Overall, this experiment showed that how effective task-based learning in Accounting Department can be because the researchers saw how engaged the learners were and how the process of completing the task created a context for effective language input.

Action Points

Having read about task based learning and having taught this class, we feel we have a much greater appreciation of the pros and cons of this approach. However, it seems to us that we are only beginning to realise what its potential and drawbacks are. Our first reaction after the class was that we wanted to teach another task based class as soon as possible. Taking into account what we had learnt from the experience, we would like to continue researching TBLT and using it in as many different teaching contexts as possible in order to experience for ourselves how effective it can be [18].

TBLT and long term learners

Since, for the foreseeable future, the classes we were teaching are likely to be comprised of long term students, we would be very interested to see if teaching task based lessons on a continuous basis to them would add up to a comprehensive language syllabus[19]. We would like to investigate this further as we would be curious to see how new language can be learnt organically rather than systematically.

Task design

The task we chose for the class was adapted from the previous year's question papers. Already, we have started to look at text book material in a new way, asking ourselves if it would be suitable for a task-based class. We have noticed that frequently, while the material may be suitable, very often activities suggested have to be made more concrete with an identifiable outcome. We would be interested to see if we could design tasks which would successfully elicit certain language. This may be a useful situation in which some learners specifically request "input" on a particular area of grammar [20]. Although the temptation might be to revert to an orthodox PPP (Presentation, Practice, and Production) approach, We are curious to see if the expressed need of the learner could be met by the task based approach.

Learner training

In a teaching context such as ours, which is a college under National University, there are commercial demands made on the teacher to satisfy the clients' wishes. We foresee that sometimes the learner style of the client learner might not be compatible with the task based approach because s/he has learned to learn in a more traditional grammar led way. In the case of long term learners, we would like to experiment with some learner in order to help them to be benefitted from this method.

Conclusion

In short, it is of great importance for a college English teacher to have a clear conception of the tasks design and then to be able to design appropriate communicative tasks for different teaching materials and to conduct activities to implement these tasks in appropriate ways with different students. Also, it is crucial for a teacher to frequently reflect on their teaching beliefs and teaching practices so that they can make continuous progresses in their teaching.

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