WHAT IS 'TASK-BASED LEARNING APPROACH'?

Olha SVYRYDIUK, PhD

Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University
zov2380@gmail.com

Abstract: What is Task-based Learning Approach? Task-based Learning is a different way to teach languages. It can help the students by placing his/her in a situation as in the real world. A situation where oral communication is essential for doing specific task. Task-based Learning has the advantage of getting the student to use his/her skills at his/her current level. To help develop language through its use. This article aims to present key principals of TBL, the advantages of using it. It gives a clear explanation of 'Task-based Learning' structure and some recommendations to use it while teaching English to adults.

Keywords: foreign languages, education, approach, task-based, adult education, learning, teaching.

How often do we as teachers ask our students to do something in class, which they would do in everyday life using their own language? Probably not often enough.

If we can make language in the classroom meaningful therefore memorable, students can process language, which is being learned or recycled more naturally [1].

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), also known as task-based instruction (TBI), is an approach, which offers students to actively engage in communication in order to achieve a goal or complete a task using language. It was first developed by N.S. Prabhu in Bangalore, Southern India. According to Prabhu students may learn more efficiently when they focus more on task than the language they are using [3]. Major scholars who have done research in this area include Teresa P. Pica, Martin East and Michael Long.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language.

TBLT enables learning process through task, which learners have to perform, or a problem they have to solve [].

"TASKS are activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" as defined by Willis [5]. Such tasks can include visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer service for help.

Assessment is primarily based on task outcome (in other words the appropriate completion of real world tasks) rather than on accuracy of prescribed language forms. This makes TBLT especially popular for developing target language fluency and student confidence. That means a task can be anything from doing a puzzle to making an airline reservation. As such, TBLT can be considered a branch of communicative language teaching (CLT).

In English language classroom:

- Tasks should be related to students' real-life language needs.
- Tasks create opportunities for focusing on form.
- Tasks develop students' intrinsic motivation.
- This approach enables teachers to see if students are developing the ability to communicate in an L2.

Task-based learning offers the student an opportunity to do exactly this. The primary focus of classroom activity is the task and language is the instrument, which the students use to complete it. The task is an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome. The activity reflects real life and learners focus on meaning; they are free to use any language they want. Playing a game, solving a problem or sharing information or experiences, can all be considered as relevant and authentic tasks. In TBL, an activity in which students are given a list of words to use cannot be considered as a genuine task. Nor can a normal role-play if it does not contain a problem-solving element or where students are not given a goal to reach. In many role-plays, students simply act out their restricted role. For instance, a role-play where students have to act out roles as company directors but must come to an agreement or find the right solution within the given time limit can be considered a genuine task in TBL.

In the task-based lessons included below our aim is to create a need to learn and use language. The tasks will generate their own language and create an opportunity for language acquisition (Krashen*). If we can take the focus away from form and structures, we can develop our students' ability to do things in English. That is not to say that there will be no attention paid to accuracy, work on language is included in each task and feedback and language focus have their places in the lesson plans. We feel that teachers have a responsibility to enrich their students' language when they see it is necessary but students should be given the opportunity to use English in the classroom as they use their own languages in everyday life [2].

A Task-Based approach to Language:

• allows for a needs analysis to be matched to identified student needs;
• is supported by the research findings of classroom-centered language learning;
• allows evaluation to be based on testing referring to task-based criterion;
• allows for form-focused instruction.

Therefore, we should select topics that will motivate learners, engage their attention and promote their language development as efficiently as possible.

What are the advantages of TBL?

1. Task based learning is useful for moving the focus of the learning process from the teacher to the student.
2. It gives the student a different way of understanding language as a tool instead of as a specific goal.
3. It can bring teaching from abstract knowledge to real world application.
4. A Task is helpful in meeting the immediate needs of the learners and provides a framework for creating classes, interesting and able to address to the students' needs.

Tasks can be used as the central component of a three-part framework: "pre-task", "task cycle" and "language focus". These components have been carefully designed to create four optimum conditions for language acquisition, and thus provide rich learning opportunities to suit different types of learners [6].

The following framework outlines the roles of the teacher and learners during a task-based learning (TBL) lesson. Note especially the degree of teacher control, and the opportunities for learner language use.

Table 1. Task-Based Learning Framework

Components of a TBL Framework		
PRE-TASK PHASE		
INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC AND TASK Teacher explores the topic with the class, highlights useful words and phrases, and helps learners understand task instructions and prepare. Learners may hear a recording of others doing a similar task, or read part of a text as a lead in to a task.		
	TASK CYCLE	
TASK Students do the task, in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors from a distance, encouraging all attempts at	**PLANNING** Students prepare to report to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or	**REPORT** Some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results. Teacher acts as a

communication, not correcting. Since this situation has a "private" feel, students feel free to experiment. Mistakes don't matter.	discovered. Since the report stage is public, students will naturally want to be accurate, so the teacher stands by to give language advice.	chairperson, and then comments on the content of the reports.
Learners may now hear a recording of others doing a similar task and compare how they all did it. On the other hand, they may read a text similar in some way to the one they have written themselves, or related in topic to the task they have done.		

LANGUAGE FOCUS	
ANALYSIS	PRACTICE
Students examine and then discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording. They can enter new words, phrases and patterns in vocabulary books.	Teacher conducts practice of new words, phrases, and patterns occurring in the data, either during or after the Analysis
Sometime after completing this sequence, learners may benefit from doing a similar task with a different partner	

Learners get *exposure* at the pre-task stage, and a chance to recall things they know. The task cycle gives them speaking and writing exposure with opportunities for students to learn from each other.

The task cycle also gives students opportunities to *use* whatever language they have, both in private (where mistakes, hesitations, and approximate renderings do not matter so long as the meaning is clear) and in public (where there is a built-in desire to strive for accuracy of form and meaning, so as not to lose face).

Motivation (short term) is provided mainly by the need to achieve the objectives of the task and to report back on it. Success in doing this can increase longer-term motivation. Motivation to listen to fluent speakers doing the task is strong too, because in attempting the task, learners will notice gaps in their own language, and will listen carefully to hear how fluent speakers express themselves.

A *focus on form* is beneficial in two phases in the framework. The planning stage between the private task and the public report promotes close attention to language form. As learners strive for accuracy, they try to organize their reports clearly and check words and patterns they are not sure of. In the final component, language analysis activities also provide a focus on form through consciousness-raising processes. Learners notice and reflect on language features, recycle the task language, go back over the text or

recording and investigate new items, and practice pronouncing useful phrases.

According to N. S. Prabhu, there are three main categories of task: information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap [3].
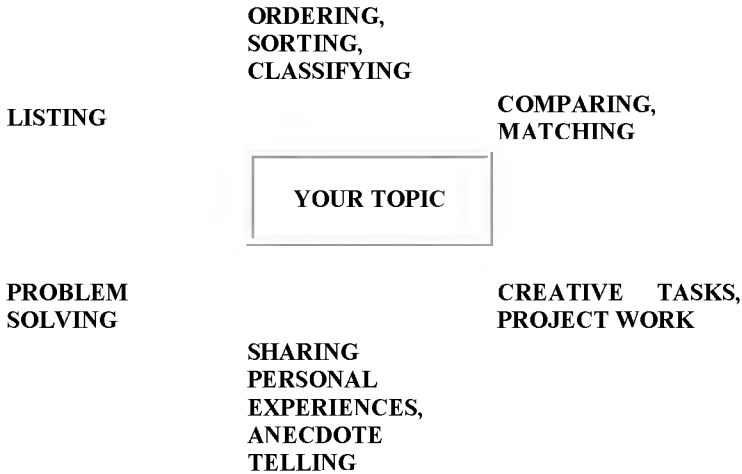
Information-gap activity, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another – or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example is completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. The activity often involves selection of relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer.

Reasoning-gap activity, which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as in information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two.

Opinion-gap activity, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions [3].

According to Dave and Jane Willis, any topic or theme can give rise to different types of tasks, which can be generated with the help of the typology TBL Task Design [6]:

Table 2. Typology for TBL Task Design

LISTING	ORDERING, SORTING, CLASSIFYING	COMPARING, MATCHING
	YOUR TOPIC	
PROBLEM SOLVING	SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, ANECDOTE TELLING	CREATIVE TASKS, PROJECT WORK

Each type involves different cognitive processes. The top three types increase in cognitive complexity from left to right, but are generally cognitively less challenging than the three at the bottom. These may involve more complex cognitive operations or combinations of simpler task types.

People have often been under the impression that task-based learning means, "forget the grammar". This would not be a wise move. The aim of analysis activities is to encourage learners to investigate language for themselves, and to form and test their own hypotheses about how language works. In the task-based cycle, the language data comes from the texts or transcripts of recordings used in the task cycle, or from samples of language, they have read or heard in earlier lessons. Having already processed these texts and recordings for meaning, students will get far more out of their study of language form [6]. Analysis activities can be followed by quick bursts of oral or written practice, or dictionary reference work. Finally, students need time to note down useful words, phrases, and patterns into a language notebook. Regular revision of these will help vocabulary acquisition.

It is important to be aware of some pitfalls concerning the use of task-based learning. Since it encourages students to use their own language and vocabulary, it is necessary for the teacher to help students expand these. Otherwise, students will not learn new phrases or words by themselves, but only increase skills in using the language the student already possesses.

This can also be solved by having students change who they work with, so that the stronger students can work with the students who are at a lower level. Where the stronger student should be told to focus on using more advanced words and phrases. This does not help the stronger students though, for that, they will need the aid of the teacher.

Another very important thing to remember is that even though after the task cycle is complete, the learning process is not. The evaluation part is critical for the students to become self-aware of the learning they have just gone through. Put crudely there are two parts in the learning process of task-based learning of equal import. The first is to do the work and go through the tasks, the second is to get the student to think about what it is he or she has just gone through. If you the teacher do not follow up in the post task, half of the task based learning process is wasted

TBL offers a change from the grammar practice routines through which many learners have previously failed to learn to communicate. It encourages learners to experiment with whatever English they can recall, to try things out without fear of failure and public correction, and to take active control of their own learning, both in and outside class.

For the teacher, the framework offers security and control. While it may be true that TBL is an adventure, it can be undertaken within the safety of an imaginatively designed playground.

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