
Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Its concept, Framework and Challenges in The English Classroom

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss about Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and its implementation in the language classroom. TBLT is one of the methodologies used in teaching English where the task is an organized activity that involves the students in understanding, using, producing the target language pragmatically based on the real-world context and the outcomes can be corrected by the teachers whether the students have already delivered the content appropriately. It stresses on the meaning rather than the form. In applying TBLT in the classroom, there are three stages need to be done which include pre-task phase, the task cycle and the language focus.

Keywords: TBLT, Tasks, Language Teaching

Introduction

English is the global language that is taught to the students all over the world. It starts to be taught from the very young age level of students to the university level students. In teaching English, the teachers need to find good methodologies, strategies and techniques to keep engaging students during the classroom activity. Not only the teachers, the students also want to have fun, exciting and real-world context activity during the learning process.

In the past, the students only listened to the teachers explaining the lesson passively in the classroom. The teacher was considered as the source of the knowledge. Now, because of the curriculum change, all the teaching and learning activities is not the teacher centered anymore. Instead, it is now the students centered where the students can learn the materials from other sources beside from their teachers.

One of the methodologies that can be applied in the classroom to make the students become more active is task-based language teaching method (TBLT). In this method, the teachers create specific tasks that are useful to the real-world application and the students complete the task individually or in a group work where the students try to construct their own ideas and express it through English. One of the strengths of TBLT is it can be applied to teach integrated skills. It can be applied to teach speaking, writing, listening, and reading at the same time.

Literature Reviews

The Concept of TBLT

There are several concepts of what task is from various writers. Among them are Nunan and Ellis. Nunan (2004) says that a task is a part of the classroom activity which involves the students in understanding, using, producing the target language that stresses on the meaning rather than the form. Ellis (2003) points out that a task is the students' workplan that contains the delivering of the language realistically which based on the real-world context and the result can be corrected.

In conclusion, the task is an organized activity that involves the students in understanding, using, producing the target language pragmatically based on the real-world context and the outcomes can be

corrected by the teachers whether the students have already delivered the content appropriately. It stresses on the meaning rather than the form.

According to Ellis (2003), there are six criterial features of the task:

1. A task is a workplan.
A task forms a plan for the learner activity. It takes from the teaching materials or of ad hoc plans for activities that appear in the course of teaching. The result of the activity may or may not match with the intended plan. Therefore, a task may not result in communicative behavior.
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
The task makes the students use the language realistically. It seeks to develop L2 proficiency through communicating. Thus, it requires primary focus on meaning.
3. A task involves real-world process of language use
A task may require the students to complete activity that can be found in the real- world application. For example, asking and answering the questions or dealing with misunderstanding will reflect those occur in real-world communication.
4. A task can involve any of four language skills.
A task may require the students to: (1) listen to or read a text and display their understanding, (2) produce an oral or written text or (3) employ a combination of receptive and productive skills. Dialogic and monologic language use may be required in a task.
5. A task engages cognitive processes
A task requires the students apply cognitive processes such as selecting, classifying, ordering, reasoning, and evaluating information in order to carry out the task.
6. A task has a clearly defined the communicative outcome
A task sets the non-linguistic outcome which function as the goal of the activity for the students. While Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is method in teaching language which engage the students to do the tasks whether in pairs or groups by using the target language for communication in which the task should relate to real-world situation (Douglas and Kim, 2014). In addition, Chua and Lin (2020) point out that TBLT's purpose is not only to make the students get the linguistic knowledge but also use the knowledge that they have before to reach the target language proficiency.

Nunan (2004) claims that there are seven principles for task-based language teaching:

Principle 1: Scaffolding

The choice of the lesson, materials, and topics in TBLT should support the learning process. The role of the teacher at first is to match them with the students' level of ability. However, the teacher should know how to eliminate the scaffolding because the students will not develop their independence which is needed for autonomous language use if it is maintained too long.

Principle 2: Task dependency

In the task dependency, one task should be finished before the students can go on to another task. In the task-dependency framework, some principles are in operation. For example, the students can move from receptive tasks (listening and reading) to productive tasks (speaking and writing)

Principle 3: Recycling

The recycling process of language learning gives the opportunity for students to learn naturally. The fact that the students will not fully master a particular linguistic item the first time they are introduced to, so

they have to be reintroduced to that item over a period of time which is called recycling which allow the students to be exposed to the target language items in range of different areas.

Principle 4: Active Learning

The best way of learning the language is by using it actively. In TBLT, the students will actively build their own knowledge and use it to complete the task for example practicing to memorize the dialogue they have made with their peers which give them the opportunity to use the language communicatively.

Principle 5: Integration

Rather than teaching language elements separately, the teacher should teach the elements together and make sure the students understand the relationship between the linguistic form, communicative form and semantic meaning of the language

Principle 6: Reproduction to creation

The teacher should encourage the students to move from reproductive to creative language use. The reproductive tasks are designed to make the students understand the form, meaning and function of the language and are also intended to make the creative tasks. It can be done by intermediate students even for beginners if the teaching and learning process is carefully arranged.

Principle 7: Reflection

Reflection is one of the important parts in TBLT because through the reflection the students have the opportunities to portray what they have learned and how well they are doing. This is important for their improvement in learning the language.

The framework of TBLT

There are three stages in applying TBLT in English classroom (Willis, 1996):

1. Pre-task phase

In this phase, the teacher introduces the topic and the task to the classroom. The teacher also introduces the important words and phrases that can be useful in doing the task. Moreover, the teacher will give clear instruction of how to do the task and give the example of the task or play a recording of a similar task for the students in order to make the students have a better understanding in the process of doing the task.

2. The task cycle

The students are given the chance to use whatever language they have already known to do the task and then improve their language through the teacher's guidance while planning their reports of the task in this stage. There are three phases in this task cycle which are the task, planning and report. While the students are doing the task whether in pairs or small groups, the teacher are monitoring from a distance. This task is designed to increase the students' fluency in English. Then, in planning, students prepare to report the result of their pair or group work task to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or discovered. Finally, some groups will present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports and compare the results. The teacher then summarizes the results.

3. Language focus

This phase consists of two parts, the analysis and practice. In the analysis part, the students discuss the features of the text and then the teacher explains important aspects and pattern of the language so the students will know the correct language features. While in the practice phase, the teacher guides practice of new words, phrase and patterns that appear in the data, either during or after analysis.

The benefits of applying TBLT framework in the classroom are first, it gives the student three standard conditions for language learning which are exposure, use and motivation. During the process,

there is a development of knowledge from general to specific one. In the task cycle stage, the students are encouraged to complete the task, make the plans and report it. These activities will give the students a chance to use the language communicatively.

Moreover, the various range of topics, texts and tasks give the students opportunity to experience different kinds of tasks that will be useful for them in a real-world situation. Furthermore, by applying the three stages in the classroom, it will make the students feel the security in learning the language because after doing the task cycle they will know there will be a language focus which will help them to correct their task without feeling being judged by their peers or the teacher.

Results and Discussion

The Challenges of Implementing TBLT in The Classroom

Just like other methods, implementing TBLT in the classroom also has several challenges during the process. According to Puong (2016) who has implemented TBLT in her language classroom, there are several constraints found in implementing TBLT in the English classroom. They come from the teacher factor, the institutional and classroom factor, and the socio-cultural environment factor.

1. Teacher-related constraints

In implementing TBLT, the proficiency of the teachers in the foreign language is highly required to support the students to complete the open-ended real-life communicative tasks. However, it is found that the proficiency of the teachers toward English is below the standard which makes it hard for them to use TBLT. Moreover, the teachers have lack of understanding of how to use TBLT in their class and they also have doubts that TBLT is not suitable with the actual teaching condition that relates to adequate time, the materials from the textbook and examinations. In addition, the teachers often depend on the textbooks which do not support TBLT in teaching and they do not want to change their old ways of teaching.

2. Institutional and classroom constraints

Besides teacher-related constraints, the institutional and classroom constraints also influence the implementation of TBLT. One of them is regarding to the norm-referenced and form-focused examinations that keep the teachers from teaching communicatively because they have to follow the rules of the institutions. In TBLT, sufficient time is needed to prepare the materials, however, due to the time pressure from heavy workloads, the teachers discourage to prepare and implement TBLT in their classes.

Moreover, the students' different levels of ability and large classes that consist of 30-35 students in the class make the students centered teaching extremely hard to be applied. The noise that they make when they do the task in pairs or groups disturbs neighboring classrooms because it is difficult for the teacher to handle the large class.

3. Socio-cultural barriers

The limited chances that the students have in using English outside the classroom discourage the students to maintain prolonged ability to improve their English communicative competence. Furthermore, because hierarchical order and respect culture, the students always expect the teacher to instruct them what to do that will affect the students' confidence to initiate learning and to improve their language competence independently. Moreover, the opinion that the teaching and learning is the process of transferring and receiving the knowledge instead of using it for immediate purposes make the students become passive.

Conclusion

TBLT is one of the approaches that can be used in teaching a foreign language to encourage the students to use the language actively. The types of the tasks used in TBLT are based on the real-world context. For example, how to write an application letter, how to reserve a room in a hotel and etc. in

choosing the tasks, the teacher needs to consider several criterial features of the task in order to make the implementation of TBLT runs successfully in the classroom.

Moreover, in order to apply TBLT approach in teaching the language, the teachers should understand the principles of implementing TBLT which involve scaffolding, task dependency, recycling, active learning, integration, reproduction to creation and reflection. These principles help the teacher to use them in the three frameworks of TBLT namely pre task phase, the task cycle and the language focus. Furthermore, TBLT, just like other approaches, also faces the challenges in implementing it in the language classroom that come from the teachers themselves, the institution and the classroom condition and socio-cultural aspect. Despite the challenges that are faced by the teacher, it is hoped that TBLT can help the students improve their ability in using the language actively and communicatively.

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