The Role of Task-Based Language Teaching in Fostering Communicative Skills Among ESL Students

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Abstract

As a dynamic and effective method for developing communication skills in students studying English as a second language (ESL), task-based language teaching, or TBLT, has emerged. This abstract looks at how TBLT organizes language learning and promotes meaningful communication in the setting of English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The study investigates the fundamental concepts of TBLT and underlines the influence that it has on language proficiency with activities that are both engaging and purposeful. Through the incorporation of real-world scenarios into language training, the goal of TBLT is to bridge the gap between student learning in the classroom and actual language usage in the real world. In the abstract, the empirical data that supports the effectiveness of TBLT is discussed, and the potential of TBLT to improve not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic language abilities is emphasized. To summarize, TBLT is a cornerstone in the cultivation of communication abilities that are essential for English as a Second Language (ESL) students to have to navigate a globalized and interconnected world.

Keywords: TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching), Language learning, Task, Motivation

Introduction:

With each passing day, the value of English as a language in India continues to flourish. In this age of globalization, it is the language that is most used for professional and commercial transactions, news and information, academic research, and higher education. "English is not only important in getting a better job, but also everywhere in social interaction. If you can't speak it then you are nobody" (Scrase, 2004). There is no denying that English is highly valued in India. More than any other nation in the globe, India has had a lengthier exposure to English. English has had a direct and indirect impact on India in a variety of disciplines, including education and medicine. Only English is provided for text resources on science, engineering and technology, and medicine. Furthermore, there isn't a single language that the entire nation can speak. India is a country where several languages are spoken, and learning one common language is highly discouraged. Considering the evidence presented above, it is imperative that students in the Indian educational system acquire English as a second language (Murali, 2009). It is a global language that English is used. English Language Teaching (ELT), which is primarily concerned with the education of general English, has expanded as a result of the ongoing interest in studying English,

which has contributed to the expansion of the field.

English Language Teaching in India:

Since it was originally implemented, the teaching of English to those who speak other languages in India has been welcomed with widespread approval from the public. The term "English as a Second Language" (ESL) was initially utilized in Bangladesh during the latter part of the 1920s. It was used to describe a second language that served a function that was both useful and helpful. The study of English is a mandatory subject for students attending Indian schools, colleges, and universities. English acts as a linguistic bridge between speakers of several other languages within the country of India when it comes to communication. It is generally agreed upon that graduates of higher education institutions are lacking in the most vital talent, which is the ability to properly utilize English in oral communication while working. This is as a result of the fact that English is the predominant language used for communication in multinational corporations located with headquarters in India. Thus, even for learners in rural India, studying English has become practically essential.

Language Learning:

In most cases, the strategies and approaches that students use to acquire a second or foreign language are the primary factors that define their level of proficiency in the language. Teachers of second and foreign languages now have a different perspective on classroom procedures and instructional pedagogies. These days, lessons are more student-centered and use flexible, practical techniques than the teacher-centered, lecture-based, and rigid syllabus methods of the past. In order for pupils to communicate successfully and confidently enter the competitive world, the educational system must equip them to be skilled in the target language.

Due to the fact that learning a language is a process that continues throughout one's whole life, it would be advantageous for the learner to conduct independent research on the language in order to get a more profound comprehension of how it operates and to widen and develop his linguistic repertory. An additional perspective, the applied perspective, ought to be included with this one on language awareness. With the assistance of the professors, this enables the students to successfully investigate, assimilate, and acquire a deeper comprehension of the language. Pennycook notes that

When English becomes the first choice as a second language, when it is the language in which so much is written and in which so much of the visual media occur, it is constantly pushing other languages out of the way, curtailing their usage in both qualitative and quantitative terms. With English taking up such an important position in many educational systems around the world, it has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions. (Pennycook, 1994)

The research that has been done on second language acquisition (SLA) has shown that the internal processes of a learner are the primary factors that determine how effectively they acquire a language. Skehan (1996) presented the idea that language learners do not just absorb language the moment they are exposed to it. He stated that this is not the case. On the other hand, the instructor can "orchestrate" the exposure in whatever way they see fit. Therefore, the teaching and learning of second languages must be carried out in a manner that produces the circumstances necessary for these processes to take place. This is since it is thought that learning is increased when the acquisition processes of learners are engaged. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that it is thought that tasks facilitate the process of negotiation, adaptation, rephrasing, and experimenting, which are fundamental components of the process of learning a second language.

Language Teaching Methodologies:

The twentieth century has seen a lot of innovation and development in language instruction. Throughout the twentieth century, many applied linguists and educators were obsessed with finding better techniques. improvements in teaching techniques were a major catalyst for improvements in language teaching approaches. Numerous ideas that have blossomed into modern technique originated from discussions on formal vs informal attitudes toward language and, most importantly, the role of students' native tongue in the classroom. Community language learning, audiolingual, the Berlitz Method, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, the Berlitz Method, and the Grammar Translation Method are all methods that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to teach English, but they are completely ineffective now because most students want to learn English so they can communicate well.

The use of a range of classroom activities aimed at enhancing students' communication skills has emerged as one of the most groundbreaking new concepts in the area of foreign language instruction in the last several decades. Classroom interaction patterns are not location-specific; rather, they are shaped by

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regional educational standards and the ebb and flow of methodological fads. The class's age and level also matter; the goal of the present learning exercise also has an impact on how people engage (Lynch & Maclean, 2000).

In this context, language educators and scholars are increasingly using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The phrase "teacher-centered, lecture-based classroom practices" (TBLT) academics and language educators that specialize in the acquisition of second languages came up with the term and refined it during their work. In regard to Prabhu's "Bangalore Project," which began in 1979 and was completed in 1984, the task-based method was initially presented for the first time. According to Prabhu, there is a profoundly felt pedagogical intuition that is obtained from experience in general but becomes tangible during professional arguments in India. This information is based on (Prabhu, 1987) observations. Reason being, maximizing planned practice or systematizing language inputs are not necessary for developing second language competence. Rather, the development of second language competence is facilitated by the construction of circumstances in which learners endeavor to communicate.

Task-Based Language Teaching:

Since the 1980s, task-based language teaching, which is sometimes referred to as task-based instruction or TBLT, has been gaining popularity and has garnered a significant amount of research interest in the domains of language pedagogy and the acquisition of a second language. Task-based language training has as its primary objective the utilization of real language in tasks that are relevant to the learner. This student-centered approach promotes meaningful communication. Through assignments, students are encouraged to utilize language in an original and natural way. Prabhu (1987) initially presented the idea of TBLT in his Bangalore Project, which put a strong emphasis on communication by having students complete "tasks." Under Prabhu's direction, a project was implemented in South Indian schools where students were given a set of difficulties and information/opinion gap exercises to complete. They were instructed by teachers to complete the activities in English. According to Prabhu, emphasizing linguistic form actually hindered language acquisition. It was formerly assumed that the evolution of language was the consequence of natural processes developing. Based on the findings of this experiment, which was evaluated by Beretta and Davies in 1985 it appears that Prabhus trainees achieved greater levels of accomplishment than their colleagues who were instructed in a more conventional manner.

Students are given the chance to actively engage in projects that will help them achieve their goals or finish their assignments using the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach. By assigning students everyday chores such as writing letters, reports, or phone calls, and then having them use language to address these problems, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) seeks to improve students' ability to communicate with one another across languages (Skehan, 1998). The fact that TBL assignments stimulate student engagement and lead to significant improvements in language competence is another reason why it is beneficial to their education. When it comes to language learning, task-supported teaching considers tasks to be resources that can be utilized by both the teacher and the students in order to advance certain language goals and objectives. Briefings, online resources, and focused comments are some of the ways in which the instructor provides assistance to the students (Samuda and Bygate, 2008). According to Breen and Candlin (1980), task-based language learning gives students a lot of freedom and responsibility, which helps them to better understand the course material, use their own language skills while working on the task, discuss and debate various ways to complete the task, and ultimately assess how well they did. In this approach to language acquisition, the learner takes center stage. Instead of using the old-fashioned way of teaching, which would have prevented students from learning to speak well, task-based learning offers an alternative. It does this by incorporating the most important discoveries in communicative language teaching. It offers a practical setting for language instruction while simultaneously giving real-world examples of appropriate language use. In task-based language education, student's complete tasks as a major part of class. This is because tasks foster an atmosphere that is conducive to learning a second language and provides stimuli for the learning processes. According to Robinson (2001), a task-based approach takes into account the cognitive demands on the learner as one component that affects the complexity of the job.

Definition of Task:

Numerous meanings of the term "task" have been proposed in the literature by academics from various study backgrounds since the 1980s. Students are required to comprehend, operate, produce, or interact in the target language while focused on applying their grammatical skills to communicate meaning. This type of assignment is referred to as a task. Rather of focusing on manipulating form, the objective of the work is to convey content more effectively. In addition to this, the work should have the appearance of being done and should be able to function independently as a communicative act. According to Nunan (2004) It is.

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A task is (1) a classroom activity or exercise that has

(a)   an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants,

(b)   a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and

(c)   a focus on meaning exchange;

(2) a language learning endeavour that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans. (Lee, 1999).

According to Prabhu (1987), a task is an activity in which students must use knowledge to arrive at a conclusion through a process of thought, with the ability for teachers to direct and oversee that process.

Contributing to the concept of tasks in language classrooms is Breen (1987), who notes that a task is an organized plan designed to offer chances for the development of skills and knowledge associated with a new language, which are then utilized during conversation.

Tasks are defined by Willis (1996) as actions that include the communication with intent of the target language in pursuit of an objective. The tasks are defined as meaning-focused activities in Ellis's (2003) definition/ Exercises, on the other hand, are often routines with an emphasis on form. Tasks are described as activities that require students to utilize language, specifically meaning, to achieve a specified aim (Bygate, Skehan, and Swain, 2001, p. 18). A task, according to some definitions, is any activity in which language learners are required to communicate using language in order to achieve a goal where the emphasis is on meaning rather than form.

Advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching

With the assistance of task-based learning, the attention of the learning process can be switched from the teacher to the member of the class who is being taught. By viewing language as a tool rather than a goal in and of itself, it provides the student with an alternate perspective on the subject. It moves education from theoretical understanding to practical application. A task helps to satisfy the learners' immediate demands and offers a structure for developing engaging activities to fulfill the needs of the pupils.

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Traditional Classroom and TBLT Classroom (Nunan, 2005)

Traditional classroom	TBLT classroom (Nunan, 2005)
Traditional form-focused pedagogy	TBLT classroom
Rigid discourse structure	Loose discourse structure
Teacher controls topic development	Students able to control topic
The teacher regulates turn-taking	Turn-taking is regulated by the same rules
The teacher knows what the answer is	Teacher does not know what the answer is to
Students' responding role & performing a limited range of language functions	Students' initiating and responding roles and performing a wide range of language functions.
Little negotiate meaning	More negotiate meaning
Scaffolding for enabling students to produce correct sentences	Scaffolding for enabling students to say what they want to say
Form-focused feedback	Content-focused feedback
Echoing	Repetition

Types of Tasks

Meaning-focused tasks are broken down into three categories, according to Prabhu (1987), which are as follows:

1 Information gap activity: The essence of this operation is the movement of data from one location or format to another.

2 Reasoning gap activity: Through the use of techniques such as inference, deduction, practical reasoning, and the awareness of links or patterns, it entails the process of obtaining some new knowledge.

3 Opinion gap activity: Being able to recognize and articulate a particular choice, sentiment, or attitude in reaction to a certain circumstance is a necessary step in the process.

The following is a list of the four different types of language acquisition activities that Candlin (1987) provides:

1. Learner training,

2. information-sharing,

3. researching and experimentation

4. learning strategy training.

In accordance with Richards and Rodgers's (2001) findings, the following categories of activities are recommended: 1. Jigsaw tasks: In these types of activities, students are required to put together several different pieces of information in order to form a full whole.

The tasks that are referred to as "information gaps" are those in which one student or group of students have a certain set of knowledge while another student or group possesses a set of information that is complementary to the first. In order to complete a task, they are required to negotiate and acquire information of the other side. 3. Assignments that require students to find solutions to problems: students are presented with a problem and some data. It is imperative that they discover a solution to the problem. The conclusion usually has just one resolution. 4. Tasks involving making decisions: Students are given a problem with many alternative solutions, and they must negotiate to select one. 5. Opinion exchange activities: Students converse and share views. They don't have to come to an understanding.

Efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching:

Language instructors' top priorities have always been to motivate their students and get them to perform. Each learner has their own unique set of objectives and characteristics, many of which will invariably have an impact on the manner in which they approach the work of learning a second language. In spite of the fact that their objectives and motivations are identical, learners may pick different paths to accomplish their objectives due to the fact that they possess their own unique constellation of distinctive attributes. Learners' motivation may be significantly influenced by the degree to which the content of the assignment is relevant to circumstances that occur in the real world. Students experience an effect when they discover that the assignments they are assigned are pertinent to their needs, aspirations, and goals.

Learners are more likely to participate in class activities and become more engaged when they are given assignments that capture their interest. When completing oral activities, students communicate or transmit ideas using whatever language they know (Willis, 1996). Rather than linguistic codes, their major focus is on meaning, which is reflective of real- world actions. Thus, by fostering the growth of their linguistic confidence, letting students talk freely may have a favorable impact on their motivation. Engaging in a discussion assignment offers learners the opportunity to assume several communication roles, such as posing queries and offering commentary on the viewpoints of others. By actively participating in an engaging setting where they are in charge of their own learning, such tasks may have a good impact on learners' motivation (Willis, 1996).

Tasks are categorized as one-way or two-way by Long (1990), with the two-way task being the more motivating as it involves meaning negotiation and information exchange. Task feedback in the form of incentives (such as encouragement and praise) has the potential to affect students' motivation. When it comes to task-based learning, teachers should provide insightful feedback that makes students feel more capable and independent. The fact that students may easily obtain feedback from their group members in cooperative learning settings is another crucial concept to bear in mind. Students require feedback to learn how to study and use effective learning practices.

Within an Indian school that is overseen by the Basaveshwara Education Society, the Lochana and Deb (2006) and Balamurugan.E, jagadeesan. A (2018) program provides support for the implementation of task-based learning opportunities. The purpose of this experiment was to test two assumptions at once by making task-based textbook exercises out of non-task-based ones: (1) Students' language abilities may be improved through task-based learning; (2) students are encouraged to engage more actively in the learning process when they are assigned tasks to complete. In addition to assisting language learners in becoming more effective speakers, the outcomes of this study indicate that TBLT also motivates language learners to continue their language studies.

Conclusion:

In summary, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a critical component in forming ESL students' communication abilities and promoting a comprehensive language learning process. This investigation has shown that TBLT's focus on meaningful activities, authentic circumstances, and learner involvement significantly affects language competence. When TBLT concepts are included into ESL courses,

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students are given the chance to utilize language in a meaningful way that goes beyond rote memorization and helps them to communicate in a variety of contexts.

The favourable effects of TBLT deployment are supported by the empirical data reviewed in this research. Research continuously show gains in pragmatic and linguistic language abilities, stressing the useful use of language in real-world contexts. In addition to showing improved vocabulary and grammatical correctness, ESL learners who have been exposed to TBLT also show an increased capacity for successful communication, meaning negotiation, and language adaptation to a variety of social circumstances.

Furthermore, TBLT is in line with the way language education is developing, acknowledging that students must acquire abilities that go beyond conventional language bounds. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of good communication in a variety of cultural and professional contexts as the world community grows more linked. By emphasizing task- driven language acquisition, TBLT gives ESL students the tools they need to traverse this complexity and fosters international competency and linguistic adaptation.

Essentially, Task-Based Language Teaching becomes a driving force behind ESL students' development into competent and self-assured communicators. Through the facilitation of a communicative approach that extends outside the classroom, Total Belly Language Teaching (TBLT) makes a substantial contribution to the development of well-rounded persons who are equipped to handle the language demands of contemporary society. TBLT stands out as a transformational technique that not only teaches language but also cultivates the communicative competence necessary for success in varied linguistic environments, an approach that language educators will find appealing as they continue to search out novel ways.

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