

A Review of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract-- Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) represents an influential direction in second-language pedagogy, where learning occurs through meaningful tasks rather than isolated language drills. This review brings together foundational theories, recent research, and classroom practices to present a comprehensive understanding of TBLT. Using a structured review process, literature published between 1987 and 2024 was examined to identify major principles, strengths, and challenges associated with this instructional approach. The synthesis of studies indicates that TBLT not only strengthens communicative ability but also increases learner participation and real-world language use. However, issues such as teacher preparedness, assessment limitations, and context-specific constraints continue to affect its classroom application. The review concludes with recommendations for effective integration and areas requiring further research.

Keywords-- Task-Based Language Teaching, Foundations, Task Cycles, Instructional Models, Empirical Evidence, and Challenges in Implementation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Task-Based Language Teaching has gained widespread attention due to its emphasis on communication and purposeful language use. Unlike traditional approaches that prioritize explicit teaching of grammar, TBLT encourages learners to use language naturally while completing tasks that mirror real-life situations. The origins of this approach can be traced to Prabhu's (1987) Bangalore Project, which demonstrated that learners could develop language skills through cognitively engaging activities even without direct grammar instruction. Since then, researchers such as Ellis (2003), Nunan (2004), Long (2015), and Willis (1996) have expanded the theoretical and practical dimensions of TBLT. The present review brings together these perspectives to provide a synthesized understanding of how TBLT works, why it is effective, and what challenges it presents.

II. PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

A systematic qualitative review method was used to gather and analyse relevant literature on TBLT. First, foundational texts and peer-reviewed articles from major journals published between 1987 and 2024 were selected.

Works of key scholars including Prabhu, Long, Ellis, Willis, and Nunan were included to ensure theoretical completeness, while newer empirical studies were chosen to represent contemporary implementation realities. Materials were screened based on their relevance to task design, instructional principles, classroom models, learner outcomes, and challenges related to TBLT. After selection, the literature was closely examined to identify repeated ideas and emerging themes, which were synthesized into the narrative sections of this review.

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

TBLT draws heavily on communicative language teaching and interaction-based theories of second-language acquisition. Long (2015) highlights that interaction during tasks enables learners to negotiate meaning, which plays a key role in language development. Ellis (2003) notes that tasks push learners to focus on meaning first, but still allow opportunities to attend to linguistic form when necessary. Nunan (2004) emphasizes that tasks should resemble real-world communication by requiring learners to work toward an outcome using authentic language. These perspectives collectively position TBLT as a learner-centred model that promotes natural language use through purposeful activity and interaction.

IV. TASK-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Several pedagogical models guide how TBLT is implemented. Prabhu's (1987) three-phase structure - pre-task, task cycle, and post-task language focus frames the learning process in a way that encourages engagement before addressing formal accuracy. Willis (1996) proposed an extended version that includes planning and reporting stages to help learners reflect and improve their performance. Long (2015), on the other hand, stresses the importance of a detailed needs analysis to design tasks that reflect the genuine communicative demands of learners. Although these models differ in sequence and emphasis, they share a commitment to creating meaningful and purposeful language use.



V. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TBLT

Research consistently shows that TBLT contributes positively to language development. Rahman and Chowdhury (2021) found that task-based instruction significantly enhances communicative competence among language learners. Jeon and Hahn (2006) reported that teachers value TBLT because it increases classroom interaction and student motivation. Carless (2007) observed that tasks help learners develop fluency by pushing them to communicate spontaneously and negotiate meaning. Shintani (2016) additionally showed that input-based tasks support vocabulary retention and comprehension, especially for beginners. Collectively, these findings present strong support for TBLT as an effective instructional approach.

VI. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING TBLT

Despite its strengths, several practical barriers influence the successful adoption of TBLT. Carless (2009) identifies the lack of teacher training as a major obstacle, noting that many educators are unsure how to design and manage tasks. Context-related issues such as large classes, time limitations, restricted resources, and exam-focused curricula further complicate implementation. Many teachers also find it difficult to balance meaning-focused communication with the need for grammar accuracy. Designing tasks that are both authentic and level-appropriate requires time, skill, and institutional support. These challenges highlight the need for professional development and contextual adaptation.

VII. DISCUSSION

The reviewed literature suggests that TBLT aligns well with modern theories of second-language learning, particularly those emphasizing interaction and meaningful communication. While the approach offers clear pedagogical advantages, its effectiveness depends greatly on teacher expertise, institutional support, and classroom context. Adopting a flexible and balanced approach one that integrates meaning-focused tasks with opportunities for form-focused instruction appears most promising.

The findings of the review also point to a growing need for assessment systems that recognize communicative performance rather than only grammatical correctness. As TBLT continues to evolve, more research is needed to explore digital task-based environments and innovative assessment tools.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Task-Based Language Teaching provides a dynamic and communicative approach to language pedagogy that emphasizes authentic language use and learner participation. The literature demonstrates that TBLT improves fluency, motivation, and interactional skills, making it an attractive option for contemporary classrooms. However, its implementation is shaped by several challenges, including limited teacher preparation and contextual constraints. With appropriate adaptations and sustained professional support, TBLT has the potential to significantly enhance language learning. Future studies exploring online and blended TBLT, task complexity, and performance-based assessment can further strengthen its practical value.

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