

Implementing Task-Based Learning Methods in Indian Classroom

Dr. Devimeenakshi. K.
Assistant Professor (Senior)
VIT University
Vellore Campus
Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. T. Karuankaran
English Language Teaching Center
University of Jaffna
Sri Lanka

Abstract

The Task-Based Learning (TBL) is supported and teachers are instructed to train students in terms of applied learning in Indian institutions. Nowadays, academicians encourage applied learning and changing the design of the syllabus. According to them, the learners are expected to invent details and perform their tasks during classroom sessions. Thus, TBL stands unique in assigning language practices to the learners. Moreover, the current syllabus is meant to have some components of Technical English, Business English, Soft Skills and a research project. Indeed, the project report is a new arrival in English Language Teaching to improve the skills of students in research writing. The aim of this paper is to describe the Task-Based Learning concept, and how teachers train their students through this methodology, thereby catering to their needs, focusing on language skills, so helping them to face the competitive world with required skills. Hence, the teachers take up the roles of facilitators, and drill the students with relevant activities. The outcome of lesson plans, teaching methodologies, students' feedbacks to the approaches of teachers, learners' performance, result of their performances, evaluation and recommendation.

Key points: TBL, syllabus, lesson plan, teacher, learner, activity, evaluation, feedback

1. Introduction

The main focus of lesson plan is assigning tasks to the learners, and they use language as a tool to finish the task. The tasks are assigned to students for language learning purpose, and teachers evaluate their assignments with certain criteria in order to improve their language/communication skills. The practices reflect the real life's state of affairs, and their use of language proves the day-to-day life existence. As a result, the learners will develop their fluency in English language while speaking, and improve their knowledge in vocabulary through writing/speaking. It is a necessary point to be specified that language learners can celebrate meaning, but without form they can't communicate effectively. "Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) is also known as Task-Based Language Teaching or Task-Based Instruction focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language." (Task based Learning, 2013). The tasks can be of any activity, such as, listening to audio track and identifying the sounds of language, viewing to visual presentation and writing a paraphrase, reading newspapers and responding, and answering to the questions of employers in interviews. Of course, every activity has a purpose to be performed during classroom sessions. The four communication skills are to be empowered by the learners to acquire language/communication skills.

Samar Yahiya Al-Shareef (2012) expressed Willis (1996) definition on task “it is defined as an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome.” (TBLT, slide 4).

2. Lesson Plan

The lesson plan allows the instructor to give tasks. “The dominant model of lesson planning is Tyler’s (1949) rational-linear framework. Tyler’s model has four steps that run sequentially (1) specific objectives, (2) select learning activities, (3) organise learning activities, and (4) specify methods of evaluation.” (Jack C. Richards, Willy A. Renandya, p. 31). Hence, following Tyler’s model the activities are designed sequentially, the plans follow:

Plan 1 – focusing on learner’s outcome

Plan 2 – relevant activities catering to the needs of students

Plan 3 – structure of the activity

Plan 4 – evaluation criteria

The above plans are implemented through suitable trainers to train the trainees. The coach must select activities suiting to the interest of the learners. The said learner should have interest or he has to cultivate his interest to satisfy the purpose. The expected outcome from the students is the fruitful result of them in teaching-learning process. The pupils are anticipated to gain language, communication and life skills through their lessons in learning English language.

3. Activity

The activity is divided into three phases, pre-activity, while activity and post-activity. There are five activities, 1. Listening to conversations, 2. Listening to speeches and practising the phonetic sounds, 3. Reading a poem/passage and writing a paraphrase, 4. Analysing a picture and narrating the event, 5. A language game

3.1 Activity 1 – Listening to conversations

Pre-activity

- Informing the students during the previous class to listen to some conversations
- Giving instructions to students (telling or giving a hand out)
- Permitting the student to read the instructions
- The student plans for action

In pre-activity phase, the student will be mentally prepared for the performance. He develops self-confidence and hence no complex or fear. He can discuss with his peer group. The student assumes or imagines about the activity, thus, creating interest in young minds to undergo a language activity. The ambience helps him to perform the activity with total physical response. The very interest of him will provide a healthy language learning experience.

While activity

- Monitoring the students (teacher)
- Concentrating (student)
- Trying to identify the sounds of words
- Association of thoughts
- Jotting down the points

During, while activity process, the student puts in efforts to find out answers. He manages to recognise the sounds and seeks help of his classmates to clarify his doubts. In spite of clarifying doubts too, he will be in a dubious state, lacking clarity. This is the second stage of the activity.

Post-activity

- Listened to conversations and discussing with peers (student)
- Checking answers (student)
- Highlighting wrong answers (student)

Implementing Task-Based Learning Methods in Indian Classroom

- Correct answers demonstrate him to avoid errors (student)
- Encouraging the students to do homework (i.e.) to go for more language practices (teacher)
- Teaching how to write correct answers with suitable evidences (teacher)

The post-activity paves way to the improvement of teacher as well as the student.

Evaluation

- Whether recognised familiar to unfamiliar words
- Mother tongue influence?
- Rate of speed (pace)
- Time management
- Accuracy (grammar)

Feedback

- About the activity (student)
- Knowledge gaining (student)
- Self- assessment (learning strengths and weaknesses of one's own)
- Applications (student)
- About students' performances (teacher)
- Measuring the level of language learning of students (teacher)
- Learning the psychology of students (teacher)
- To improve teaching-learning process (teacher)

3.2 Activity 2 – Listening to speeches and practising phonetic sounds

Pre-activity

- Giving prior information to listen to speeches of native speakers
- Listen to great personalities
- Announcing the nature of the exercise
- Warm up

The pre-activity method provides learners to learn about the exercise earlier, and to work on them to get the exposure of the language. He feels cool to face the test. He is not pressurised with language activities. Therefore, the student exploits the language for pleasure.

While activity

- Active listening (student)
- Finding out words and meanings (student)
- Sometimes selective listening (student)
- Focusing on target (student)
- Going on rounds (teacher)
- Analysing the body language (teacher)
- Empathising (teacher)

During the second stage, the student is serious in learning the language. He focuses himself to the given activity and works sincerely. His problem is to find out the meanings and answers to complete the task. The teacher justifies the student's body language and understands their difficulties in learning second/foreign language.

Post-activity

- Correcting the sounds (teacher)
- Facilitating speech practice (teacher)
- Pinpointing the errors (teacher)
- Understanding the errors and working on them (student)
- Acquiring accurate sounds (student)
- Imitating as native speakers (student)

In this particular stage, the student gets the enjoyment in practising English language sounds like native speakers. When listening to conversation, they comprehend the tone, pitch, rhythm (in some cases), and the emotions of the speakers. Listening to songs are warm up exercises, they sing songs along with the audio tracks and have a happy learning session. The learners acquire accurate sounds (most probably British English), consequently augment their speaking skills through listening exercises

Evaluation

- Listening to the spoken words of learners
- No mother tongue influence
- Fluency
- Vocabulary (correct usage of words)
- Intonation
- Body language

Feedback

- Liking
- Willingness
- Needs more sessions
- Expects the teacher to pronounce the sounds properly
- Making students to be thorough with phonetic sounds and linguistic terms
- Inspiring the students to speak only in English at least within the college campus.

3.3 Activity 3 – Reading a poem/passage and writing a paraphrase

Pre-activity

- Selecting a poem/passage (teacher)
- Informing in the class before the class work about the reading exercise (teacher)
- Instructing learners to browse and prepare for the class (teacher)
- Learners knew something about the exercise (pre-learning/writing of the learner)
- The reading practice is familiar to them (learner)
- The known attitude builds confidence within them (learner)
- Confidence promotes interest (learner)
- Interest produces willingness to acquire any language (learner)

During pre-activity phase, learners undergo a raw experience and get an opportunity for self-study. The mere self-study permits them to stand on their own selves without distress. As soon as they gain the courage to learn a new exercise, their experience in learning a language becomes a memory. Their fruitful memories are relished; accordingly, language practices are repertoire of memoirs as they read poems/passages for writing a paraphrase.

While Activity

- The instructor issues hand outs
- The learners read them and work on those exercises
- Students face predicaments when they seek contextual meanings
- Skimming, scanning and analysing
- Segregating into three paragraphs, introduction, content and conclusion
- Revising and editing

The above stage is a difficult part for the amateur language learners, because they have to hunt and struggle for the meanings of the words and intentions of the writers in the given poem/passage.

Post Activity

- The exercise signifies trial and error practice (learners)
- Understands the role of vocabulary (learners)
- Thought-provoking (learners)
- Trying to overcome errors (learners)
- Judging learners capacity and goes for other passages suitable to their levels (trainers)

Evaluation

- Indicating the errors
- Identified the poem/passage
- Scrutinising whether they have understood the poem/passage
- Relevant information
- Structure of the paraphrase
- Grammar

In reading exercise, the student reads and writes, so in this context, reading and writing are inseparable.

Feedback

- Assessing the learning capacity of learners (teacher)
- Noticing the speed of the learners in finishing the task (teacher)
- Commenting on the interpretations of the students (teacher)
- Difficult exercise (student)
- The exercise was familiar because of previous reading (student)
- Must improve in vocabulary skills (student)

The students in this stage encounter a different experience in obtaining language skills. Reading and writing focus on form than meaning, since the content interrogates the depth of knowledge of the reader than sheer life skills.

3.4 Activity four - Analysing a picture and narrating the event

Pre-activity

- Giving homework to view a picture and analyse
- Announcing (in the classroom) to choose a theme for the given picture
- Allotting time (5 minutes) to find out a theme
- Group/pair work
- Relevant theme to current issues

In this stage, the students think and select a unique theme, their creative skills are encouraged. When we divide them into groups or ask them to work as a pair work, the language classroom becomes a community hall with plenty of noise. The brain storming session generates a rapport among the language learners with the aid of the teacher. The current theme showcases the general knowledge of the students. In this context, the focus is on meaning than the form to exhibit their relationship with men and matters in society.

While activity

- Mentoring the students (teacher)
- Implications (teacher)
- Discussing not chatting (teacher)
- Examining whether they have understood “theme” (teacher)
- Applying (the theme) and working (student)

The said activity session is a joyful involvement of students to build relationship among their classmates. They come across interpersonal communication and nurture empathy within themselves.

Post-activity

- Knowing to pick out themes (pupil)
- Realising the value of colours (colour indication) (pupil)
- Emphasising grammar (pupil)
- Choice of words (pupil)
- Updating skills (pupil/tutor)
- Way of presentation (pupil)

The post-activity portrays the need of hardworking and constructing their personalities (teacher/student). The general knowledge is equally important to teachers and students. The significance of presentation is highlighted in this phase.

Evaluation

- Checking grammar
- Checking Spelling
- Checking General Knowledge
- Checking the time
- Checking relevancy

Feedback

- Adored the activity (learner)
- Aware of presentation (learner)
- Live through the experience (learner)
- Self-interrogation (positive/negative thoughts of the learner)
- Learners' attempt (teacher)
- Evaluating students' ability in grammar and planning to proceed with action (teacher)
- Motivating students' to learn the rules of grammar

The activity four is meant for the attempts of students and evaluations of teachers. The students' true colours will be revealed in written exercises. Nowadays, many students are influenced by system's (computer) spellings and grammar, thus, they are very indifferent to traditional practices and suffer while writing any piece of art.

3.5 Activity 5 – A language game

Pre-activity

- Suggesting to play language games in earlier periods (trainer)
- Bringing papers/cards suitable to the game (trainer)
- Asking students to follow the rules of the game (trainer)
- Mentioning about the scores (trainer)
- Winning/losing (audience)

In language class, the trainer can go for some games, but the prominent game is “what is the good word”, it enlightens the audience with actions and words. A student should read a word in the card and to enact, however, he must not spell the word out. The enactment is a solo mime and the audience (students) are engrossed through actions and try out the words. It will be like an out bound training session for students.

While activity

- Keenly observing the actions of trainees (trainers)
- Not allowing to try more than three times (trainers)
- Two clues are permitted (trainers)
- Anxiety (trainees)
- Put in efforts (trainees)
- Winning attitude (trainees)

During this period, the moment will be sensational, the trainer and trainee are being alert to play the game.

Post-activity

- Studying to act
- Absorbing the nature of audience
- Providing correct cues to audience
- Being smart in completing the action within the time limit

The trainees go for regular practices and equip themselves for acting skills. Moreover, they should be thorough in vocabulary to grasp the meaning of the given word.

Evaluation

- Time taken
- Grasping the meaning

Implementing Task-Based Learning Methods in Indian Classroom

- Accurate signs and actions
- Following the rules

The trainees out of fretfulness will spell out the words. If they spell out the words, they will attain foul status and will be dispelled out of the game. The rules of the game are strictly followed for the authenticity of the game.

Feedback

- Enjoyment (trainee)
- I learnt (trainee)
- What they learnt (trainee)
- When they learnt (trainee)
- Whether they learnt (trainee)

Language game is essential in every TBL class, so to say; game is conducted to learn language through games, learning is for learning purpose, of course, in a light way. This perspective shall be there in the language classroom for the validity of teaching language through games.

4. Conclusion

This paper ensures the fact that language learning is through teaching practices, thereby learners acquire language skills, communication skills and life skills by means of TBL activities in classrooms. The pre-activity, while activity, post-activity, evaluation and feedback offer a structure to the instructors to instil language exercises in the minds and souls of future generation.

5. Recommendation

1. The teaching modes may be assignments, field trips, outdoor classroom (University Library), analysing Case Studies; e-learning; Learning through research, Eg. Project Report.
2. Digital assignments can be posted through you tube.
3. Online teaching/learning ought to be encouraged and practised.
4. Online resources must be available.
5. Practising online task-based exercises and posting, simultaneously examined by the teacher and remarks shall be sent.

References

- Richards C. Jack, Renandya A. Willy. (n.d.). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*, p. 31. Retrieved November 24, 2016 from https://books.google.co.in/books?id=VxnGXusQII8C&pg=PA24&lpg=PA24&dq=willies+views+on+tasks&source=bl&ots=qgwillb7BII&sig=VV2CnmzaXHMKOPwTU8NC73i0R00&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjW04K-_sHQAULr48KHbv-DS4Q6AEIRDAJ#v=onepage&q=willies%20views%20on%20tasks&f=false
- Al-Shareef, Samar Yahiya. (2012). Retrieved May 12, 2017 from https://www.slideshare.net/Sa345mar/task-based-learning-14703475?next_slideshow=1
- Task-based approach. (2015). Retrieved November 24, 2016 from <http://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/teachers/staff-room/teaching-articles/task-based-approach>
- Teaching approaches: task-based learning. (2017). Retrieved November 24, 2016 from <http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-task-based-learning/146502.article>
- Task Based Learning. (2013). Retrieved May 12, 2017 from <https://www.slideshare.net/tortadericota/tbl-1>, slide 2
- Task Based Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved November 24, 2016 from <https://www.languages.dk/archive/pools-m/manuals/final/taskuk.pdf>
- Task-Based Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved November 24, 2016 from http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1667913/2_task.pdf/70f2f98e-0362-4cd4-bc1d-ece49ae878f0