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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AT THE ENGLISH LESSONS

Abstract. This research focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of Task-based Language Teaching Method to give instructions how to let students of different language levels master English for communicative purposes.

The article analyzes the peculiarities of the use of this method to improve communicative competence by getting learners to solve a task or set of problems by communicating together in the target language.

This article highlights the basic principles of TBLT Method which allows students to effectively and quickly achieve the desired result, namely free and fast communication in a foreign language. Among major principles of the method of research there are 1) a meaningful communication and interaction of the students, 2) negotiation through a communicative problem to solve, 3) the usage of real-life tasks, 4) a motivating assessment.

The main focus of the TBLT Method is to develop conversational communication skills in a foreign language by usage of close to real-life tasks with situational and interactional authenticity. The first refers to how realistic a task is in terms of its content and aims. The second refers to how realistic a task is in terms of language use.

It is stated in the article that open tasks are preferable to be used at the TBL lessons, mainly those tasks for which no right answer or range of right answers can be provided in advance. It is stressed that there are tasks of different levels according to cognitive challenges, i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The last one is the most demanding level of all because it requires the use of the previous five levels in order to synthesize data into a new and original work.

This article also enumerates the stages of the lesson build due to TBLT method which include: language practice, pre-task stage, task stage, report stage, analysis and further practice stage when students analyze and study the language connected with the topic of their task and practise English units using them in a given context.



The article also highlights that TBLT method may include different activities, mainly: listing, ordering, ranking, sorting, when students list, and put things in the correct order, or rank things according to some criteria; comparing and contrasting, when students compare different things to find some similarities and differences; information gaps, as well as matching tasks, problem-solving, decision-making tasks, sharing personal experiences, projects and creative tasks, debates, disputes, role-play, simulations etc.

Keywords: task-based language teaching, problem-based learning task, opinion gaps, spontaneous spoken interaction.

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ЕФЕКТИВНІСТЬ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ НА ОСНОВІ ЗАВДАНЬ НА УРОКАХ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Анотація. Це дослідження зосереджено на перевагах і недоліках методу навчання мови на основі завдань, щоб дати інструкції, щоб допомогти студентам з різними рівнями знань легко оволодіти англійською мовою для комунікативних цілей.

У статті аналізуються особливості використання цього методу для вдосконалення комунікативної компетенції шляхом спонукання учнів до вирішення завдань чи комплексу питань шляхом спільного спілкування засобами цільової мови.

У цій статті висвітлено основні принципи методу *TBLT*, який дозволяє студентам ефективно та швидко досягти бажаного результату, а саме вільного та швидкого спілкування іноземною мовою. Серед основних принципів методу дослідження є 1) змістовне спілкування та взаємодія студентів, 2) спілкування задля вирішення комунікативної проблеми, 3) використання реалістичних завдань, що зустрічаються у повсякденному житті, 4) мотиваційне оцінювання.

Основним напрямком методу *TBLT* є розвиток навичок розмовного спілкування іноземною мовою шляхом використання наближених до реальних життєвих завдань із ситуативною та інтеракційною достовірністю. Перший принцип стосується того, наскільки завдання є реалістичним з точки зору його змісту та цілей. Другий стосується того, наскільки реалістичним є завдання з точки зору використання мови та мовних одиниць.

У статті зазначено, що на уроках *TBLT* бажано використовувати відкриті завдання, переважно ті, для яких не можна заздалегідь визначити правильну



відповідь або діапазон правильних відповідей. У фокусі дослідження є також те, що існують завдання різного рівня складності відповідно до когнітивних процісів, серед яких є запам'ятовування, розуміння, застосування, аналіз, оцінювання та створення. Останній рівень завдань є найвимогливішим рівнем з усіх, оскільки він вимагає використання п'яти попередніх рівнів для синтезу даних у нову та оригінальну роботу.

У цій статті також перераховано етапи побудови уроку за допомогою методу *TBLT*, які включають: мовну практику, підготовчий етап перед виконанням завданням, етап виконання завдання, етап звіту, аналіз і подальший етап практики, коли студенти аналізують і вивчають мову, пов'язану з темою їхнього завдання, а також практикують мовні одиниці, використовуючи їх у певному контексті.

У статті також підкреслюється, що метод *TBLT* може включати різноманітні завдання згідно із досягненням поставленої мети, це головним чином такі: складання списку, упорядкування, ранжування, сортування, коли студенти перераховують і розміщують речі в правильному порядку або ранжують речі за певними критеріями; порівняльно-зіставні, коли учні порівнюють різні речі, щоб знайти певну схожість і відмінність; інформаційні прогалини, а також завдання на встановлення відповідностей, вирішення проблем, завдання на прийняття рішень, обмін особистим досвідом, проекти та творчі завдання, дебати, диспути, рольові ігри, моделювання тощо.

Ключові слова: навчання мови на основі відкритих завдань, проблемне навчальне завдання, інформаційні прогалини, спонтанна розмовна взаємодія.

The formulation of the problem. Among the variety of modern language teaching methods teachers often choose Task-based learning (TBL). TBL offers an alternative to a conventional PPP approach to structuring, planning, and implementing lessons, and is considered more effective by many colleagues.

Despite a significant number of works of modern scientists and practitioners, the issue of choosing the most effective methods of training to ensure oral communication in the process of learning a foreign language, especially for students of higher educational institutions for specific purposes, there are some questions that still remain open for revisions, development and discussions. That's why we try to systematize the abundant information into one short review with conclusions and notes for instructions to be used in practice during the classes of English, Maritime English, etc.

The relevance of the study of TBLT Method is determined by the social needs of students to reach the desirable purpose of acquisition of fluent English in a short time by means of communicative strategies.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Task-based language learning has its origins in communicative language teaching, and is a subcategory of it. Educators adopted task-based language learning for a variety of reasons.



TBLT was popularized by Prabhu N.S. who noticed that his students could learn language just as easily with a non-linguistic problem as when they were concentrating on linguistic questions. Major scholars who have done research in this area include East M., Krathwohl D.R., Leaver B.L., Long M. Oxford E., Pica T.P., Richards J., Richards P., Rod E., Rodgers T., Swan M., Warwick L., Weber H., Willis J. and many others.

Some moved to a task-based syllabus in an attempt to develop learner capacity to express meaning, while others wanted to make language in the classroom truly communicative, rather than a pseudo-communication that results from classroom activities with no direct connection to real-life situations.

The purpose of the article is to study TBLT Method and determine its advantages and disadvantages in the process of learning and teaching a target language.

Main material presentation. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) can also be called as Task-based Language Learning (TBLL) or Task-based Instruction (TBI). The idea of “task” is not as simple as it might seem, because teachers often confuse it with an “exercise”. Let's look at what the task is and how it is different from the exercises we give our students.

According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, “a task is any activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e., as a response), for example, drawing a map while listening to the recording, listening to an instruction and performing a command” [5, 584].

Task is an outcome-oriented second language instructional segment of work in a curriculum or lesson plan. In this perspective, it focuses on an outcome that the L2 learner is expected to produce or attain [3, 94].

The objective of the approach is set within with Communicative Language Teaching (of which TBL is sometimes considered a subset) and is primarily to improve communicative competence by getting learners to solve a task or set of problems by communicating together in the target language, refining their production and presenting their findings. The main principle of the method is based on doing things rather than overtly learning things.

Most teachers use a traditional lesson structure – PPP which stands for Presentation, Practice, Production. In this model, a teacher **presents** the target language to students in the context first, then students **practise** using the language in a restricted context by doing controlled practice activities, and finally, they **produce** the target language during the freer practice stage [7, 376].

Unlike PPP, in a TBL lesson framework, a teacher does not pre-determine what language to teach. Students complete the task around which the lesson is built, and the target language is determined by what happens as they do it. Usually completing a task gets students engaged in using English naturally and involves collaboration.



Task-based language teaching is an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and an attempt by its proponents to apply principles of second language learning to teaching [5, 585].

Task-based language learning lies on other four major principles which are common to all Communicative Language Teaching). These principles include:

1. Meaningful communication and interaction. Meaning is primary. Meaningful communication is essential for language learning, as the principle aim is to improve communicative competence [5, 585].

2. Negotiation through a communicative problem to solve. A communicative problem in the task has to be solved by the students using their own experience and knowledge. Each group of students will have their own ways of tackling tasks and their own ideas to input. Making language personal, as it is claimed, makes it memorable. In this way, the method can also be called Problem-based learning (PBL) as a part of it [9, 43].

3. The usage of real-life tasks. There must be a link with a real world task or situation. These tasks involve activities that people do according to their daily life settings.

4. A motivating assessment. The achievement of a task in a foreign language is, in itself, a motivating aim and motivation is often seen as a critical component of successful language learning or acquisition. The outcome of the task is assessed in terms of its non-linguistic features. It means that the task is assessed not by the way language is used during task performance, but mostly by the fact whether the actual communicative purpose of the task has been achieved [1, 213].

According to Ellis Rod [6], a task has to satisfy **4 criteria** to qualify as a task in this context:

- The primary focus should be on “meaning” by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances;

- There should be some kind of “gap”, i.e. a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning;

- Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources, linguistic and non-linguistic, in order to complete the activity;

- There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language, i.e. the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right [6, 223].

TBL focuses on non-linguistic tasks. While an activity which requires learners to say, fill in gaps in a text with the correct preposition is undeniably a task in the generally accepted meaning of that word, within TBLT a task is distinguished by not being, overtly at least, a language-focused exercise but one which parallels or **simulates a real-life task**. These are tasks whose accomplishment leads inevitably to the use of language in a real communicative setting [1, 214].



Situational authenticity refers to how realistic a task is in terms of its content and aims. For example, few learners may ever need to cooperate in English to plan a day trip or play a card game.

Interactional authenticity refers to how realistic in terms of language use the task is. For example, the task can evince a need to negotiate, enquire and suggest something [8, 34].

Open tasks are preferable to be used at the TBL lessons. These are those tasks for which no right answer or range of right answers can be provided in advance. For example, a task which requires people to canvass a range of opinions on a topic and present the findings to a group will not have outcomes that are predictable in advance and is a task which cannot be graded in terms of right or wrong solutions.

Though, there are some tasks which may have facets which are closed and others which are open. Comparing and matching tasks, ticking from the list tasks, ordering, sorting and classifying tasks are totally of closed types of exercises. Nevertheless, they can lead to problem solving tasks, creative tasks and project work, discussions and disputes, etc. [3, 96].

There are some levels of cognitive challenges of the tasks which can be stated as follows:

Level 1: Remembering. This involves simply the ability to recall a unit. For example, the past tense of undertake is undertook.

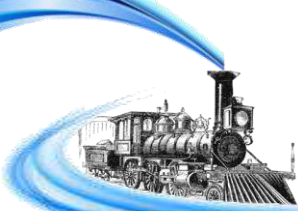
Level 2: Understanding. This involves some deeper thought to get to grips with a fact. For example, that certain items or events have characteristics in common. Comparison and matching tasks fall mostly into this category, for example, making lists of things which are related and those which are purely leisure activities and those which are mixed in some way.

Level 3: Applying. This involves using knowledge and understanding to make a decision. For example, knowing that a lion is a carnivorous animal, understanding what that means and applying it to being cautious in approaching the animal. Classification tasks fall into this category [Krathwohl, 215].

Level 4: Analyzing. This requires the application of levels 1 to 3 and then going on to breaking things down into constituents to understand fully what is happening. For example, knowing the needs and capacities of people, understanding what they entail, applying that knowledge to design of a building and then analyzing the design to see how it matches.

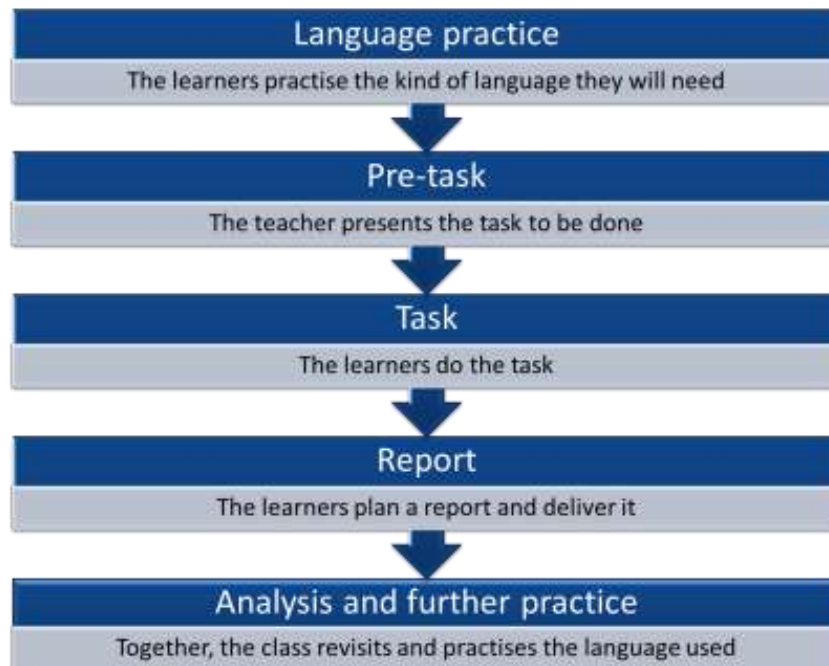
Level 5: Evaluating. This involves using all the processes in levels 1 to 4 and judging how well, for example, a building's design meets the needs of the people who will live or work in it. Identifying problems and issues fall into this category.

Level 6: Creating. This is the most demanding level of all because it requires the use of the previous 5 levels in order to synthesize data into a new and original work. It is at this level that TBLT is mostly revealed. Without first tackling tasks, it



is arguable that a task will not be completed to anyone's satisfaction. Creative tasks and extensive projects fall into this category [1, 216].

The TBLT Stages at the English Lessons include the following steps (Pic. 1):



Pic. 1. The TBLT Stages at the English Lessons

Stage 1. Language practice. The students do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

Stage 2. Pre-task stage. At this stage, a teacher engages the students, sets expectations about the task, and gives instructions.

Stage 3. Task stage. Students complete the task in pairs or groups, and a teacher monitors and provides support if necessary. Next, students prepare and plan how they are going to report the outcome of the task to the whole class.

Stage 4. Report stage. Finally, students report the outcome of their task. A teacher can provide feedback on their performance.

Stage 5. Analysis and further practice stage. Students analyze and study the language connected with the topic of their task (a source can be different, e.g. a listening script, a reading text) and practise using it in a given context.

The teacher should use *class time* for experience of real language in use that learners might not get outside class, especially spontaneous spoken interaction. As for out of class time: some text book activities are best done at learner's own pace. The teacher should:

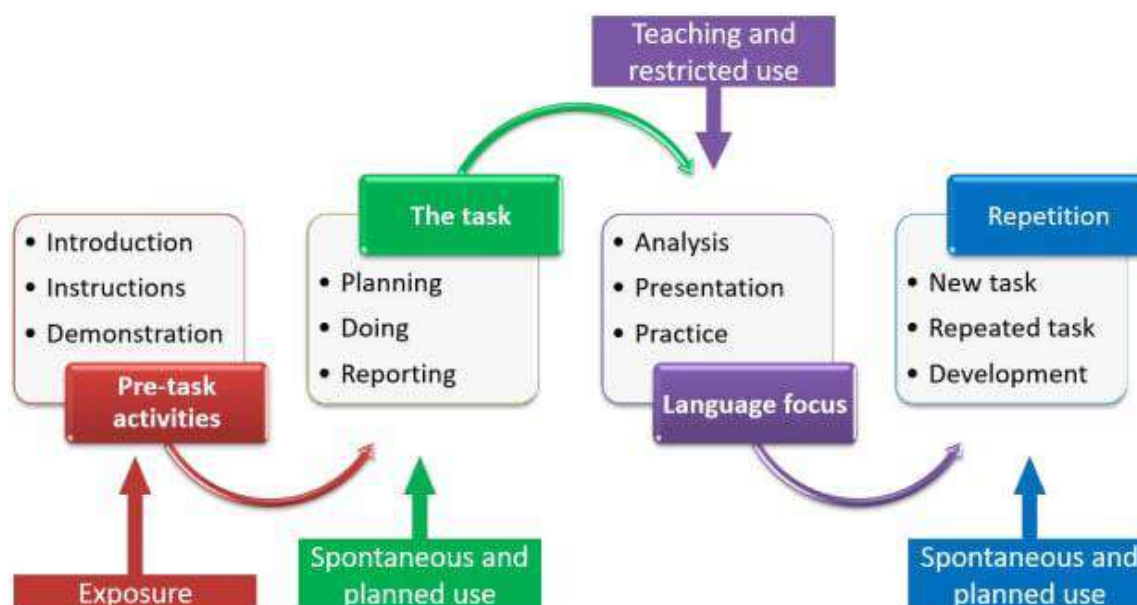
- prepare topic and task related vocabulary at home prior to the task;
- do form-focused exercises (grammar, vocabulary) for homework;



- do the listening / reading and follow-up activities in their own time.

It's preferable to encourage independent vocabulary learning and out of class projects / surveys [9, 72].

All these stages can be blended with certain variations. The correlation of TBLT stages are shown in picture two:



Pic.2. Correlation of TBLT stages

Compared to a traditional lesson, the teacher's role is reduced and the majority of the time is spent with the learners constructing meaning together [4, 36].

The groups of students can be formed which are nearly homogenous in terms of level even in large classes with mixed levels. These groups can work at their own pace and with language they can confidently deploy. Groups can even be working on different tasks simultaneously. Many students are highly motivated as they enjoy the practical nature of tasks and the opportunity to use their imaginations and personal skills [2, 64].

TBLT method may include different activities, mainly:

1. Listing is a task when students come up with a particular list of things. The outcome of such a task can be a mind-map or any other visual representation, such as tables, charts, or timelines. For example: “List the domestic chores you have to accomplish each week”. This may also include brainstorming, fact-finding, games based on listing: quizzes, memory and guessing.

Another example is the following: “You are going to make a bucket list. First, discuss bucket list ideas. Think about the following: Agree on a list of 5 most interesting things and give at least one reason for doing it - what you'd like to include



on your bucket list and why, - what experiences you could recommend to your partner. Work in pairs / groups. Share ideas for your bucket lists.” [8, p.23].

2. Ordering, ranking and sorting. Students list, and put things in the correct order, or rank things according to some criteria. The outcomes of ordering and sorting tasks can be a mind-map or any other visual representation, such as tables, charts or timelines. For example: “List the domestic chores you have to accomplish each week and rank them from the most difficult to less ones”. This may also include sequencing, ranking ordering, classifying, categorizing [2, 71].

For example: “Work in groups. Choose a product or service. Think of some popular brands for that product or service. Compare the brands you have chosen. Put them in order from best to worst (1=best). Think about: brand identity/values, cost, quality, customer service” [8, p.33].

3. Comparing and contrasting. Students compare different things, they can find similarities and differences, find things in common, or spot differences. For example: “Discuss your summer holidays, find similar and different sides. This includes any sharing from the experience to find similarities and differences, as in the sample above”.

There is one more example: “You are going to plan and discuss your own life map. Think of your likes, dislikes, goals and plans. Look at the topics and make notes: money and success, a job, family, friends and relationships, learning something new, a way of life. Work in pairs. Tell your partner about your life map. How different or the same are your life maps? What has surprised you the most in your partner's life map?” [8, 9].

4. Information gap. This can be an information gap where one student has some information that the other does not have, and the task requires them to share that information. For example: “Read different news stories and discuss which one is fake. Justify your choice” [3, 96].

5. Opinion gap / opinion exchange is a task when there is some kind of problem, and students have to discuss it and come up with the best solution for it. For example: “Plan an ideal meal that shows up your country cuisine” [4, 25].

6. Matching task. Students can match captions / texts / recorded extracts to pictures, short notes, or headlines to longer texts, e.g. news items, etc. For example: “Look at the photos. Make guesses about the people. Read the facts about the people and match them with the pictures. Talk to your partner. How close were your guesses? Discuss how you were able to match them. Prepare to tell the class how you have done it” [8, p.51].

7. Problem-solving, decision-making. Students are presented with a problem and come up with a solution. For example: “Allocate lottery money to improve your school/university/dormitory, etc. This includes giving advice, planning”.



Another example can be: “Think of a town centre where there is too much traffic. In pairs, think of three alternative solutions to this problem. List the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. Then decide which alternative would be the cheapest one, the most innovative one and the most environmentally friendly one. Report your decisions to another pair / group / the class, and discuss with them which solution would be the best one to put forward to the local government” [9, 37].

8. Sharing personal experiences (and storytelling). Such activities provide learners with opportunities to speak for longer and in a more sustained way. And it is something people often do in a real life. For example: “Work in pairs. Talk about what has been happening in your lives recently. Talk about: travel – business or pleasure; trips or weekend breaks, social life, free-time activities, entertainment – books, films, TV programmes. Decide who has been doing the most interesting things” [8, p.25].

9. Projects and Creative tasks. Project work is work which focuses on completing a task. Project work normally involves a lot of resources – time, people and materials – and learners practise a range of skills and language systems. A group of teenage learners work on a project to develop a series of posters on how to protect the environment. Project work is becoming an increasingly popular feature within the ELT classroom. Common projects are class magazines, group wall displays about students' countries and designs for cities of the future. For example: “Listen to this soundtrack and design the movie plot to it”. This may include newspaper, posters, survey fantasy, etc. [2, 74].

10. Debates, disputes. Debate is a process that involves formal discourse, discussion, and oral addresses on a particular topic or collection of topics, often with a moderator and an audience. In a debate, arguments are put forward for common opposing viewpoints. Participants take turns presenting their ideas and responding to those of their opponents. The aim of a debate is to explore different perspectives and reach a conclusion or resolution.

Disputes occur if, for example, the different parties in a purchase agreement are in disagreement over who has breached the contract. It can also occur if one person (an employee) feels he has been illegitimately terminated by his boss (the employer). The dispute lasts until both parties reach an agreement.

11. Role-play, simulations. Role-play – drama-like classroom activities in which students take the roles of different participants in a situation and act out what might typically happen in that situation. For example, to practise how to express complaints and apologies in a foreign language, students might have to role-play a situation in which a customer in a shop returns a faulty article to a salesperson [5, 530].

Simulations are classroom activities which reproduce or simulate real situations and which often involve dramatization and group discussion (role-play



does not include group discussion). In simulation activities, learners are given roles in a situation, tasks, or a problem to be solved, and are given instructions to follow (for example, an employer–employee discussion over wage increases in a factory). The participants then make decisions and proposals. Consequences are “simulated” on the basis of decisions the participants take. They discuss their actions, feelings, and what happened [5, 501].

Speaking about the problem-solving or the problem-based learning task (PBL), it comprises the following stages:

1. The learners elect a member to be the chair of the group and another to be its scribe. These roles may rotate around the group members at each session.

2. The learners bring to bear as much of what they already know as is appropriate on the problem and suggest / brainstorm areas to research.

3. The scribe lists these areas and the tasks are distributed to the group members.

4. Individually or collaboratively, the learners carry out the research they need to seek a solution to the problem.

5. The learners return to the group and present their findings which are discussed with a tutor present in a seminar to check for accuracy and errors.

6. Further research aims are identified and the process repeats until the group is satisfied that it has reached a reasonable conclusion and solution to the problem with which it was presented.

7. The group presents its findings to the teacher and receives feedback [3, 113].

The problem-based learning task enhances and helps students to practise their skills of presenting solutions and discussing them rationally. It is based on a clearly relevant real-world scenario and may even be based on a real problem encountered in a real life to which the combined ideas of the group will contribute ideas for solutions. This is clearly a strong motivating factor for people to work assiduously on the task [4, 24].

Conclusions. Tasked-based activities for ESL students are a wonderful way to help students build language skills, while also developing their confidence.

A TBLT syllabus which is organized around tasks, rather than in terms of grammar, vocabulary or functions. As a popular teaching approach, it's a way of helping students to engage in something they're interested in and encourages them to use communication skills in order to problem-solve.

Unlike an activity which is focused on grammar and new vocabulary, a task, on the other hand, can be worked on through an extended period of time and is more authentic in its teaching of language as it relates to the real-life situation.

Open tasks are preferable to be used at the TBL lessons. These are those tasks for which no right answer or range of right answers can be provided in advance and which cannot be graded in terms of right or wrong solutions.



Comparing and matching tasks, ticking from the list tasks, ordering, sorting and classifying tasks can be totally of closed types of exercises, but they can lead to problem solving tasks, creative tasks and project work, discussions and disputes, etc.

The tasks can be of different levels according to cognitive challenges, i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The last one is the most demanding level of all because it requires the use of the previous five levels in order to synthesize data into a new and original work.

There are certain stages of the English Lesson built in accordance with TBLT approach. The language practice stage requires from students to do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language. At pre-task stage a teacher engages the students, sets expectations about the task, and gives instructions. At the task stage students complete the task in pairs or groups, and a teacher monitors and provides support if necessary.

Finally, students report the outcome of their task. A teacher can provide feedback on their performance at the report stage. Analysis and further practice stage requires from students to analyze and study the language connected with the topic of their task and practise using specific language units in a given context.

All these stages can be blended with certain variations. Compared to a traditional lesson, the teacher's role is reduced and the majority of the time is spent with the learners constructing meaning together.

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