

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE VIA TASK-BASED
LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT).РАЗВИТИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ
TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT)

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Annotation: *The following article deals with the issue of communicative teaching methods, mainly TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) approach, which are one of the most fundamental problems of modern EFL teaching. Unlike other methods, Task-Based Language teaching offers an alternative for language teachers. A natural context is developed from the students' experiences with the language that is personalized and relevant to them. The main focus of this approach is the process rather than the product. Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in the activities and tasks. Activities and tasks can be either: those that learners might need to achieve in real life; those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom.*

Key words: *competence, TBLT (Task-Based language teaching), interaction, authentic, communicative, strategic, pragmatic, linguistic skills, sociolinguistic, teaching philosophy*

It is known that new tendency of teaching English as a foreign language mainly relies on communicative approach. Traditional approach of teaching English put more stress on teaching form rather than meaning. Yet, later, it became obvious that there was a need to teach language on communicative proficiency rather than on the mastery of structure. The logical development of Communicative Language Teaching is considered as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT is a type of method which is based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching.

As we mentioned above, one of the modern approaches of teaching English as a foreign language is based on teaching communication. Communicative competence is also stressed in CEFR as one of the four competences which should be developed in a language learner. As a main tool for teaching communication TBLT is considered as a foremost approach in forming and developing learners' communicative competence. The key focus for TBLT approach is on process rather than product. Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in the activities and tasks. Thus, we considered it actual to learn the role of TBLT approach in teaching English as a foreign language and analyze the results taken from the project for further use.

People across the world try not to fail in communication. Acquisition of good linguistic skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling does not mean to establish a successful communication. By having sociolinguistic competence we can communicate more successfully. It is a key factor in expressing our thoughts

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in exact situation, in treating and responding to our hearers in a proper way. When a person talks to somebody he must have a clear idea about the social and cultural background, position, age, job, character of his interlocutor. In succeeding communication it is very important to know who is the hearer, when or where the conversation is taking place. If the person is not aware of the social or cultural situation in which communication occurs he may fail it. When we communicate we should take into consideration not only linguistic aspects but also sociolinguistic aspects of the speech. For example, in the classroom we regard our students in a certain way because of their role. In the street on Sunday we might perceive the same individuals very differently.

I'd like to say that I've 20-years teaching experience in Bukhara State University. The list of subjects I used to teach is quite various: ISS, IS, Listening and Speaking, Developing intercultural competence, and lectures on Lexicology and Literature of English speaking countries (English Literature).

Personally I prefer implementing Task-based language teaching (TBLT) which focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language. Such tasks can include visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer service for help.

The process of task-based learning itself teaches important skills. Students learn how to ask questions, how to negotiate meaning and how to interact in and work within groups. Within this group work, they are able to observe different approaches to problem solving as well as to learn how others think and make decisions.

These are all skills that our students will need in order to be successful in the real world, regardless of which language they use there.

In addition, task-based teaching provides students with the linguistic components they will need to accomplish these real-world tasks. These include: How to introduce themselves, how to talk about themselves, their families, their interests, their likes and dislikes, their needs, etc. in the right socio-cultural context.

I'd like to describe one of my successful classes on ISS (Independent Study Skills), which was highly evaluated by my colleagues while teaching first year students of B2 level. The topic was "Improving memory" which I decided to present via teaching a wide range of various mnemonics, which in their turn were accompanied by video instructions. There were acronyms, associations, method of Loci, chunking etc. Having presented each mnemonics, I asked students to do the following tasks: designing their own acronyms, make a story in association etc. I'd like to mention my students' preference to practice voicing mute interview as it was very funny and enjoyable. So there was no any trouble to make it communicative and interactive. I do not have problems with Uzbek students as they have B1-B2 level and they rarely make mistakes in linguistic aspect.

There are some challenges with Turkmen students (the only international students who enter Bukhara State University without exams and they only do have basic knowledge of English). Turkmen students have speech difficulties in organizing their thoughts and they rely on their L1, and it affects their writing too. As a teacher I don't understand their L1, as a result they feel isolated and embarrassed. Their personality differences lead to lack of communication. As I teach English literature (lectures and seminars) to 2-nd year students, and only during practical classes I've an opportunity to evaluate Ss communicative competence. But they fear to make mistakes in front of Uzbek students and prefer to stay silent and passive. That's why current year Turkmen students form one group but it doesn't work either as they don't have any motivation and English Literature as a subject is too sophisticated for them. Then I asked them to stick Russian (here my focus is on content rather than communication) but in vain as they do not know it either. So it's still a challenge.

We should mind linguistic or grammatical competence as well. To my understanding linguistic competence is an ability to use grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, punctuation, spelling correctly. In other words, morphology, phonetics, semantics, syntax, phonology are the main areas of linguistic competence. Students have to acquire a good linguistic competence in order to construct correct sentences.

It very rarely happens when my first year students have problems with constructing grammatically correct sentences. Sometimes they fail in differentiating run-on sentences, fragments, compound, and complex sentences. Moreover, they may incorrectly use some vocabulary. And this is the result of the linguistic competence deficiency.

Considering the transformation of my TBLT-based class to have linguistic competence as the focus, I have come to conclusion that it is very challenging as in methodology books TBLT approach is defined by following: “It is an approach that offers students material that they have to actively engage with in the process of their learning, enabling them to explore their ideas freely and use their own words without worrying about mistakes in grammar, vocabulary or other mechanical aspects of language.”[1.166](Abraham Panavelil Abraham. 2015), while according to Nunan (2004), ‘task’ is a “*piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form*” (p.10) So you see, the objective of the given approach is not focused on developing linguistic or grammatical competence. Here I’d like to say that if while any task our students are not given a new grammar rule they don’t feel being taught.

I do agree that grammar competence should be in focus but applying it in TBLT class will demand from teacher much efforts, time and creativity. For instance, my class on ISS on the topic “Improving memory” can teach *proper names* as these words are given in handouts to memorize. The second grammar aspect can be Grammatical categories (F.ex.: The category of Tense: Past Simple Tense) as in one of the mnemonics learners are supposed to implement *visualizing (make up a story using the words to be memorized)*

It should be stated that without acquiring linguistic competence we cannot produce a piece of good task product.

In fact, the intended meaning of expressions in a given context might differ remarkably from culture to culture, resulting in various interpretations of the same expression (Murray, 2010).[2.124] Therefore, effective cross-cultural communication requires not only knowledge of linguistic competence but also knowledge of pragmatic competence.

Pragmatic competence is an ability to convey one’s intention appropriately and to interpret another’s intention in a communicative situation. The intended meaning of expression in a given context might differ from culture to culture resulting in various interpretations of the same expression. Different cultures and language backgrounds can lead to misunderstanding and pragmatic errors. Therefore, not only linguistic but also pragmatic competence is required in a successful communication. The speakers’ relationship, the situation, the context, the time and place play an important role in pragmatic competence. For example, the following sentence may be interpreted differently: 1. *Can you lift this box?* (request, asking for help) 2. *Can you lift this box?* (Are you strong enough to lift it?). In my ISS class devoted to improving memory techniques, I used an activity *voicing mute video*. That video showed a conversation between 3 people in the office. Here I have to mention that learners were divided into two groups, as a result we had an opportunity to observe two completely different polylogues: 1) conversation about hiring a novice worker; 2) conversation between office manager, his secretary and the secretary’s husband that came to clarify some questions of personal concern. As you see it happened due to pragmatics. I strongly believe that if the class had been divided into 3 or 4 groups the other two conversations wouldn’t have been alike.

We should not forget about strategic competence, a lack of which may account for situations when students with a firm knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent. Strategic competence is the ability to cope with unexpected problems, when no ready-made solutions are available. Strategic competence involves strategies to be used when communication is difficult; it is of crucial importance for foreign language learners. At oral language exams such students may even fail, and their teachers often cannot comprehend how that could happen to their “best students”. Strategic competence is activated when communication learners wish to convey messages which their linguistic resources do not strategies allow them to express successfully.

One more competence which is required in successful FLT is sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistics is a word used to describe the study of the appropriateness of language in different contexts. In other words, sociolinguistics is the study of how situational factors such as the cultural context and setting of a speech event affect the choice of what should be said. The cultural context plays a vital role in accurate

expression of meaning. Other contextual factors such as the time when the utterance is said, the setting of the speech event and the participants involved all affect the language being said. An utterance may be grammatical, but as in the advice giving example, one must know whether or not the utterance is appropriate to the given context. When language learners learn how to manipulate their utterances to make them appropriate to the situation in which they are speaking, it is said that they have achieved sociolinguistic competence in that language. When one has a high linguistic competence, and a low sociolinguistic competence, the communication may not succeed. In this situation, the learner takes the meaning he or she wishes to convey and applies the appropriate grammar rules for speaking that utterance in the target language, but since he or she is lacking a full stock of sociolinguistic rules for speaking in that language, he or she compensates by applying the sociolinguistic rules of his or her native language instead. The result, as shown in the examples, is grammatically sound statements that are misunderstood since they do not conform to the sociolinguistic norms of the target language. The speaker, in ignorance of the norms, does not even realize that any sociolinguistic rules of speaking were broken, and feels confused when the listener responds strangely or seems putting off by what was said.

So, how can the foreign language teacher increase the sociolinguistic competence of students? An obvious possibility might be to teach culture and sociolinguistic issues explicitly in the classroom; however, this approach is quite problematic. Culture is hard to define, much less teach to students not yet fully competent in the language of instruction, which is why culture is often taught only in the advanced levels classes. In the case of English as a Second Language, teaching such a sensitive topic as culture to a classroom of students from countries all around the world can be particularly challenging.

My teaching philosophy has evolved over the past 20 years with my experiences at Bukhara state university and one year in Bukhara public specialized in English school №16. Due to teaching different learning audience I tried a huge number of methods and techniques. Moreover, I had an experience teaching Tajik to foreigners from the USA and Russian to Japanese and Korean businessmen which influenced my vision of ideal teaching.

I consider that the key factors (core values) of effective teaching are: 1) friendly atmosphere; 2) what to say not how to say (priority of content over the form or style); 3) technology supply (ICT, multimedia, virtual tours). Let me explain each with an example from my own teaching.

Friendly atmosphere

When you create a positive classroom atmosphere, students learn better. Every student must feel safe and important in the class in order for maximum learning to take place. A positive classroom environment does not just happen; the teacher creates it. Lead your students by example. Changes begin with the teacher's positive caring attitude and thoughtful construction of the physical environment. Begin each class greeting students with a smile and a personal welcome. Help each child feel important and set a positive tone to the class. Organize your classroom neatly and methodically to control confusion and stress. You and the students need to know where to find books and materials at all times. Plan lessons that allow students to actively participate in the learning process, and arrange the desks to meet the needs of the students and lessons. Teach children to set measurable academic and behavior goals. Acknowledge the completion of the goals with stickers, treats, public announcements and certificates. Search for students' strengths and build on them. Put activities in your lesson plans that allow every child to feel a measure of success. Praise the children frequently and find something positive to say about each student.[4.7]

In my class I try to follow the given instructions. As one can see establishing friendly atmosphere considers many aspects: motivation, developing analytical and critical thinking, teacher and peer to peers interaction.

I have a habit to thank my learners for answers and praise them even if their answers are bias and incorrect. As a result some students become confused as they consider that one shouldn't be thanked for a wrong respond.

What to say not how to say

The second value I have is to consider the content rather than the manner of speech. Learners are exposed to a considerable amount of language through stimulating content. Learners explore interesting content and are

engaged in appropriate language-dependent activities. Languages are not learned through direct instruction, but rather acquired “naturally” or automatically. It supports contextualized learning; learners are taught useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than as isolated language fragments. Hence students make greater connections with the language and what they already know.

Last year when I organized “Debate club” for the first year students I noticed very interesting peculiarity of our students` speech. They are getting ready with long awesome full of adjectives speech trying to impress listener by pronunciation, fluent sophisticated phrases but forget about the meaning. When I took notes of presenter`s speech and shared it they were surprised to see only two lines of idea expressed.

The integration of language & content teaching is perceived by the European Commission as “an excellent way of making progress in a foreign language”. It effectively increases learners` English language proficiency & teaches them the skills necessary for the success in various professions. Learners gradually acquire greater control of the English language, enabling them to participate more fully in an increasingly complex academic & social environment.

Technology supply

The third value I hold to is implementing ICT in my class. Bill Robertson expressed the following opinions on the importance of digital technology in language teaching, “It`s proved that multimedia technology plays a positive role in promoting activities and initiatives of student and teaching effect in English class. Technological innovations have gone hand in hand with the growth of English and are changing the way in which we communicate. It is fair to assert that the growth of the internet has facilitated the growth of the English language and that this has occurred at a time when computers are no longer the exclusive domains of the dedicated few, but rather available to many. And as a result if we neglect or ignore technological developments, they will continue and perhaps we will never be able to catch up, irrespective of our discipline or branch. For this reason, it is important for language teachers to be aware of the latest and best equipment and to have a full knowledge of what is available in any given situation. Teachers can use Multimedia Technology to give more colourful, stimulating lectures. There are many techniques applicable in various degrees to language learning situation.”[5. 122]

Modern technology can help enhance the quality of input, authenticity of communication, and provide more relevant and useful feedback. In particular, communication technologies such as the Internet and satellite television have been found to be widely used as a way to bring authentic materials into the classroom, involve learners in more authentic communications with distant audiences, and provide researchers the opportunity to better examine the language learning process. Additionally speech technology, while still not quite ready for full implementation for language education, has already been shown its potential for supporting language learning.

Technological aids play an important role in effective teaching and learning foreign languages, as well as, teachers also must play a great role in achieving essential results in language teaching by using digital technology. As Min Pun stated, “Multimedia technology and language teaching have gone hand to hand for a long time and contributed as teaching tools in the language classrooms. However, multimedia technology is still a source of fears and insecurity for many teachers everywhere around the world despite the latest developments applicable to language teaching such as websites, blogs, online journals, teaching methodology and so on. So many countries have tried to modernize their equipments, have spent large amount in technology and have proved the positive effects of integrating technology to language teaching. Still, there are many teachers who still have no interest to teach the language with technologies.

Conclusion The foundation stone of my teaching philosophy is the combination of friendly atmosphere, meaningful content teaching and integration of technology to language teaching. I've also found, however, that an open exchange between students and teachers and among students themselves can only take place when the instructor provides structure and direction. Students need a clear idea of what's expected of them in the classroom and in their assignments.

To sum up I'd like to say that I enjoy teaching as from early childhood (at the age of 3) I was dreaming of becoming an English teacher and work at that awesome building of Bukhara State University.

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