



## KEY CHALLENGES IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

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Task-based learning (TBL) encourages language learners to complete meaningful interactive tasks which, in turn, encourages communication between learners and between the learner and the teacher (Wills and Willis, 2007).

TBL requires learners to use the target language with a specific objective in mind, for example writing a letter, planning a trip to a specific destination or designing a project in a team-based situation (Wills and Willis, 2007).

The communication that TBL encourages enables discussions of the target language and the ways in which the language should be used which encourages deeper learning and the acquisition of a larger vocabulary (Wills and Willis, 2007).

Task-based teaching presents various challenges for teachers in terms of how to develop the tasks that are specified in a task-based syllabus into specific lessons (Skehan, 2018) and how to encourage participation of all learners in TBL and task-based lessons (Ellis, 2020).

The rationale for this choice of topic is that whilst TBL is highly effective method for language learning because it encourages the learner to acquire/use the target language as a tool and not simply as a goal (Dorathy, 2018), TBL presents key challenges for both teachers and learners.

The aim of the essay is to highlight the main challenges and possible ways of overcoming these challenges so that the multiple benefits of this learning approach can be harnessed.

### **Introduction –introduction to TBL**

Challenges in TBL – an outline of the main challenges in TBL

The exploration of the specific challenges for task-based learning will be divided into these sub-sections:

Constructing lessons around TBL – this sub-section will explore the difficulties, for teachers, of creating lessons based around TBL in terms of creating realistic tasks that ensure that all learners achieve the learning goals for the class (Ellis, 2005) so that the strategic planning goals can be met (Tavakoli and Skehan, 2005).

Participation of all learners in TBL activities – not all learners participate equally in classes utilising TBL (Sofiana and Mubarak, 2018) which is problematic because as Viriya (2018) suggests, this could affect the ability of non-participative learners to use the language in the correct way. As Sulaiha and Lee (2009) note, if students do not participate, for whatever reason, then this will negatively affect their learning process. This will be explored in reference to the model of speech production proposed by Levelt (1989).

Learner motivation when using TBL – not all learners enjoy the task-based approach which impacts their motivation for language learning which, in turn, impacts their advances in language learning (Namazian-Dost, 2017).



Meeting learning targets when using TBL – whilst the specific task can, in theory, be designed to meet learning targets, in practice TBL does not always occur according to the learning plan (Faez and Tavakoli, 2018). This means that it can be difficult to ensure that all learners meet the specific learning targets included in the lesson plan (Ellis, 2003; p. 188).

Overcoming the challenges of TBL – how the identified challenges can be overcome to increase the effectiveness of TBL for all learners.

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#### Concept of TBL and effect on Learners Performance

“Learning a second or foreign language may be facilitated using a teaching strategy known as Task-based learning (Ellis et al., 2019). Tasks assigned in class are oriented at fostering language acquisition and development (Tan, 2021). Within the context of the TBL curriculum, a focus on grammatical and lexical norm is reduced in preference of a strategy that is more realistically practical and interactive (Rachayon & Soontornwipast, 2019)”.

The ability to communicate effectively is essential for learning a new language. This feedback loop allows learners to revise their dialogue in consultation with their language partners, resulting in clear and understandable information (Masuram & Sripada, 2020). By negotiating, students are more likely to be conscious of the formal aspects of the target language. This can be done by emphasizing the shape of the language, which students may not always be aware of (González-Lloret, 2019). In order to acquire a second language, it is necessary for students to concentrate on the forms of the target language. In consideration of this, it may be deduced that value consistency and input modification are both significant (Fang, et al., 2021).

According to this point of view, tasks provide students with a beneficial opportunity to analyze the significance of the material, make modifications to the content, and focus on the formal aspects of the language they are attempting to acquire (Bhandari, 2020).



Learner outcomes are regarded as being of the utmost significance in the process of education because they assist learners in transitioning from an understanding of the semantics of the target language to an understanding of how to interpret it, in addition they assist students in testing hypotheses regarding the target language. For these reasons, learner outcomes are considered to be of the utmost significance (Nassaji, 2020). Students are able to identify the gap between what they intend to express in their second language and what they are really capable of communicating due to this technique. This allows students to develop on the “linguistic abilities they already possess, enabling them to overcome the gap” (Chong & Reinders, 2020). In other words, production provides students with a unique opportunity to actively apply their cognitive resources. Student output is not only an indication of acquired data but also of learning on the job. Research has revealed that assignments offer competent opportunities for students for modifying their production to make it more comprehensible (Namaziandost, Nasri & Esfahani, 2019).

“Fluency, accuracy, and criticality are considered to be the three most important aspects of learning a second language. The ability of a student to speak a language clearly and correctly is referred to as fluency, while accuracy refers to the learner’s capacity to use the language in the manner in which it should be used in accordance with the expectations of the culture. The term «criticality» relates to the extent to which a student is able to make use of increasingly complicated linguistic structures and patterns” (Ali, 2019). Learners may enhance their fluency, accuracy, and complexity by engaging in task-based learning activities. For instance, if a teacher wants to boost the students’ fluency, they may have had them participate in a task that focuses on the meaning of the words (Liu, Mishan & Chambers, 2021); If the purpose is to raise the degree of or the amount of reliability of a task, the teacher may give the students with extra activities that are task-based in order to accomplish this objective.

According to Vygotsky, the main source of cognitive and mental activity for students is the external activity they participate in. When students are actively engaged in this activity, their cognitive processes are activated. This can occur at a psychological level, including cognitive and language development (Motlhaka, 2020). The belief that what is born on the interpsychic level would eventually show itself in the whole person drives the growth of language from the interpsychic to the intracardiac level. This is accomplished by converting mental activity from external to internal, which is then followed by a process of self - reflection and estimation (Lukas & Yunus, 2021). This indicates that for second language learning, students build knowledge together cooperatively as a mutual activity.

This engages students’ interest in cognitive procedures related to second language learning, which in turn promotes learning, as Ellis (2000) explains: « First, learners work with a partner to perform a new activity. After they have learned the skill, they are able to do it on their own» (p. 209), a process that helps people learn new skills or techniques are called scaffolding. Collaborative activities that involve knowledge sharing are an effective way for students to learn a second language. Previous research has shown that working together on atasks helps students learn more effectively, and collaborative activities can help students overcome any language difficulties that may be beyond their own ability.



### Challenges in TBL

The exploration of the specific challenges for task-based learning will be divided into these sub-sections:

### Conclusion

There are multiple challenges in task-based language learning and teaching including lesson construction, equal student participation, learner's motivation and meeting learning targets, amongst language learners, all of which can be overcome using different techniques and approaches, to ensure that TBL is effective for all students.

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