Application of TBLT (Task-based language teaching approach) in English teaching in junior high schools and universities

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Abstract. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a student-centered approach that encourages meaningful interactions and authentic language use, aligning with the growing emphasis on communicative language teaching. Researching TBLT can contribute to improving English language teaching practices by exploring innovative instructional methods. Thus, through literature review, this paper provides an overview on the application and effects of TBLT in English language education in middle school and university settings. In addition, the demerits of TBLT are also analyzed to provide a critical view and suggestions. This paper aims to examine the rationale for researching TBLT in English language teaching, discuss the research methods employed, outline the main themes explored, and emphasize the importance of such research.

Keywords: Task-based Language Teaching, junior higher school, university, English teaching.

1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, an increasing number of individuals have embarked on a journey to learn English, which has gradually transformed into the universal language of communication. Such a trend has taken root not only in English-speaking countries but also in those where English is not the native tongue. Starting from kindergarten, children in numerous non-English-speaking nations are introduced to the basics of the language. As they grow older, they delve into more challenging aspects of English during their middle school years. By the time they reach university, the complexity of the subjects they study reaches new heights. However, this arduous journey is often plagued by dull teaching methods and traditional education, leading many individuals to lose their motivation to learn. Traditionally, educational systems have relied on rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction. Thankfully, there is a breath of fresh air in the form of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)-an innovative and proven method that has the potential to revolutionize the way English is taught, it has gained considerable attention in the field of English language education.

As an interactive approach, as indicated by Paul J. Moore (2018), "Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a broadly defined approach to language teaching research and practice that uses task as a unit of analysis for research and practice in communicative language teaching (CLI)"[1]. In addition, researchers have also found the effectiveness of TBLT in practical teaching. The introduction of TBLT in a foreign language context has positively impacted learning outcomes, as this teaching method could increase learners learning motivation [2]. Additionally, researching TBLT can contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve English language teaching practices by exploring innovative instructional methods [2]. Therefore, the research on TBLT in English language teaching holds significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policy-makers. By examining a wide range of sources, this research aims to synthesize and evaluate the existing knowledge on the application of TBLT, enabling a better understanding of its practical implications for English language teaching.

2. Application and Effects of TBLT in Junior High School English Teaching

Learning motivation is a crucial factor in the application and effects of TBLT in junior high school English teaching. Using task-based language teaching (TBLT) encourages students to become actively involved with their learning, increasing their motivation for learning. Through authentic

materials and activities with real-world relevance, learners are encouraged to take ownership of what they are studying and thus become more engaged with it. This increased engagement leads to higher levels of intrinsic motivation and improved self-efficacy beliefs about one's ability to learn English successfully [3]. Additionally, task-based activities also help foster student collaboration through group work or peer tutoring which further enhances students' sense of autonomy while providing them with support from peers who can offer encouragement when needed [4].

The effects on achievement resulting from using TBLT can be seen directly through test scores and indirectly by looking at other indicators such as attendance rate or class participation level. Studies have shown that students who participate in task-based activities show an increase not only in overall academic performance but also more significant interest in language learning compared to those taught using traditional methods alone [5], which means it fosters a learner-centered approach that allows teachers to tailor the tasks to meet the individual needs of students. Teachers can ensure that students' progress and achieve their language learning objectives by addressing specific learning goals and adapting lessons accordingly.

Furthermore, TBLT promotes active and meaningful learning experiences, which can lead to deeper understanding and retention of language knowledge. When learners are engaged in tasks that require problem-solving and critical thinking, they tend to develop a deeper level of comprehension and a more profound grasp of language structures and functions. This deep understanding enhances achievement in language learning [6].

Lastly, performance outcomes associated with TBLTs include positive changes regarding fluency development and communication accuracy gains among participants. Task-based approaches provide opportunities for meaningful practice so learners get plenty of chances during lessons to interact orally, allowing them to develop communicative competence faster than if they were just given grammar instruction without speaking practice [7]. This finding suggests how effective TBLT could be when used appropriately within English classrooms, and, with TBLT, students are presented with real-world tasks that require them to use English in authentic situations. These tasks could involve solving problems, planning events, or completing projects. Students develop a sense of purpose and meaning in their learning by focusing on tasks rather than isolated language skills, leading to increased motivation.

3. Application and Effects of TBLT in University English Teaching

Firstly, it is essential to understand how TBLT works to be appropriately applied within a University English teaching classroom setting. Li (2011) states, "The necessity and feasibility of task-based teaching method in college English teaching are fundamental, which is conducive to adopting a better teaching model and achieving better teaching results."[7], while also considering their individual needs and interests. By utilizing this method of instruction, students have more opportunities for active engagement through problem-solving activities such as role-playing or simulations instead of traditional grammar drills or memorization exercises, which can often lead learners to feel unmotivated by their coursework since they lack real-world applications.

Secondly, Referring to Bao and Du (2015), "TBLT in terms of increased participation, more opportunities for speaking, easing anxiety, and enhancing enjoyment. Each aspect was illustrated by some representative excerpts for the sake of space."[8]. TBLT encourages active involvement and engagement from students, fostering a participatory learning environment. Learners are more likely to actively contribute to class discussions, group work, and other language-related tasks. This increased participation allows for more significant interaction with both the teacher and classmates, promoting the development of communication skills.

Additionally, tasks and activities are designed to promote communication and provide realistic contexts for language use. Students can improve their fluency, accuracy, and overall speaking skills by engaging in conversations, role-plays, and other speaking activities. Moreover, focusing on authentic tasks and meaningful interactions can create a more relaxed and supportive learning

atmosphere. TBLT allows learners to communicate naturally and authentically rather than focusing solely on language accuracy. This approach can help reduce anxiety-related barriers and foster a positive learning experience. Lastly, students can see the practical value of learning English by integrating tasks relevant to real-life situations. This application-oriented approach helps students connect their learning to the world outside the classroom, increasing their motivation and enjoyment of the learning process.

As a final point, research has shown positive correlations between student motivation levels when using TBLT methods and those using other approaches like direct instruction. This could be mainly attributed to increased self-efficacy among students when given more freedom during class time and because many tasks provided immediate feedback regarding progress made towards completing said task, thus allowing students to gain confidence from seeing tangible results from their efforts[9].

4. Discussion

The review of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in junior high school and university English teaching reveals several similarities and differences in its effects and reasons for adoption in these two educational contexts.

Both junior high school and university English teaching benefit from TBLT in terms of students' motivation. TBLT promotes active involvement and engagement by using authentic materials and real-world activities. This increased engagement leads to higher levels of intrinsic motivation as students take ownership of their learning. In terms of achievement, junior high school and university students improve their academic performance and develop an interest in language learning through TBLT. These outcomes contribute to enhancing students' language skills in both contexts.

However, there are differences in the reasons for adopting TBLT in junior high school and university English teaching. TBLT effectively increases students' learning motivation in junior high school through its student-centered approach and authentic tasks: active involvement and ownership foster engagement and interest among junior high school students.

TBLT is valued for its focus on meaningful communication and learner autonomy in university English teaching. University students, who are at a higher language proficiency level, require more advanced and complex tasks for language learning. TBLT provides: 1) Opportunities for active engagement through problem-solving activities; 2) Role-playing; 3) Simulations that are relevant to their future academic and professional goals. The participatory learning environment and emphasis on authentic tasks create a supportive atmosphere that reduces anxiety and enhances enjoyment.

5. Criticisms of TBLT

One of the main criticisms of TBLT is its lack of emphasis on explicit language instruction. Some argue that TBLT may provide insufficient opportunities for focused language practice and accuracy. While TBLT promotes communication and fluency, it may not adequately address the development of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Future research could focus on integrating explicit language instruction within the task-based framework, finding a balance between communication and accuracy. Another concern regarding TBLT is the potential for task complexity and difficulty. Tasks designed for TBLT often require a high level of language proficiency, which might challenge learners with lower language abilities[9]. It is crucial to consider the needs and abilities of different learners and adapt tasks accordingly.

Future research could explore task modification techniques, scaffolding strategies, and differentiated instruction to make TBLT more accessible to a broader range of learners. Moreover, TBLT often assumes that tasks alone can provide sufficient language input and exposure. However, this might not always be the case, mainly when learners have limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom. Another area that warrants further research is the assessment of TBLT. Traditional assessment methods may not align well with the task-based approach, as they often focus

on discrete language skills rather than holistic language use in authentic contexts. Future research could explore alternative assessment tools and techniques more suitable for capturing students' progress in TBLT, such as performance-based assessments, portfolios, and self-assessments. Additionally, research could investigate the validity and reliability of these assessment methods.

In addition, it is vital to consider the role of the teacher in implementing TBLT. Teachers may require specific training and professional development to design and implement task-based activities effectively. Future research could focus on teacher preparation and support, exploring effective training models, ongoing professional development, and the impact of teacher beliefs and attitudes on implementing TBLT. Additionally, the research could investigate the long-term effects of TBLT on language learning outcomes. While some studies have shown positive immediate results, examining the sustainability and transferability of the skills acquired through TBLT is essential. Longitudinal studies could track learners' progress over an extended period and explore the long-term impact of TBLT on language proficiency, motivation, and learning strategies.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, while TBLT has shown promise in enhancing language learning, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and areas for improvement. Future research should address the inadequacies of TBLT by exploring the integration of explicit language instruction, modifying tasks for different learner abilities, enriching language input through supplementary materials, developing appropriate assessment methods, providing teacher training and support, and investigating the long-term effects of TBLT. By addressing these research gaps, TBLT can be refined and optimized to facilitate language learning better and meet the diverse needs of learners in different educational contexts.

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