

ENHANCEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING SYSTEM

Ms. Alle Shirisha¹, Mrs. Ghousia Begum², D. Sudhakar Reddy³

Spoothy Engineering College, Nadergul, Ranga Reddy District, Hyderabad, Telangana State.

ABSTRACT

As the world has become a global village, enterprises are expanding beyond the oceans and continents; in this scenario, it has become mandatory for every individual to have effective oral and written skills in English to operate their businesses successfully and to excel in their respective jobs. The number of engineering colleges is increasing year by year in India, in a similar manner the number of graduates who seek out jobs also is increasing but many of them are found to be unemployable despite they have sound subject knowledge but they lack in communication skills. The role of a teacher is pivotal in improving the language skills of students and they can use alternative methods for improving students' language proficiency. This paper attempts to provide an insight of how Task-based learning system helps in improving language skills effectively, which finally helps the learners fabricate their employability skills.

Key Words: English Language Proficiency, Task-based Language Teaching, The role of teacher

I INTRODUCTION

As the number of engineering colleges is mushrooming in India, it is becoming very difficult to provide employability to the graduates who complete their Engineering course successfully and entering the real world of competition in search of suitable jobs despite they have good subject knowledge, as they are lacking communication skills. As the world became global village enterprises expand beyond the continents and oceans, it is becoming very essential for every individual to have effective communication skills to run their businesses successfully.

It is crucial to improving the communicative proficiency of these students in the current globalized and competitive world.

Communicative proficiency is one's ability to use language effectively and meaningfully in giving and receiving the required information. The English language has become a fundamental tool for communication across the continents. Deficiency in English Language skills becomes an obstacle in the personal and professional development of young technocrats as it greatly affects their confidence level in performing well in the recruitment process and on job roles.

It has been observed that engineering students who hail from both rural and urban backgrounds face several problems at the time of job interview and admission for further studies in various universities as they lack in knowledge of interview techniques, inadequate written and oral communication skills, the manifestation of knowledge received etc. Regardless of higher scores in their studies, students often come across with several problems during job selection procedures and interviews. From this, it can be understood how much important is it to enhance the language and employability skills of these students. Communicative proficiency is one's ability to use language meticulously. Keeping this fact in mind, improving English language skills becomes inevitable and here the role of English teachers becomes decisive and stimulating. Teachers should start finding the fears of students when they start communicating in English hesitantly and try to downsize their fears by encouraging them. Generally, students from vernacular medium background find it difficult to articulate their opinions in English as their schooling and intermediate education has been completed in vernacular media and they have not been exposed to the usage and practice of English language in their communication. In this scenario, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) becomes a great helping tool in eliminating the students' fears and encourages them in articulating their outlooks in a constructive and organized manner while they execute the assigned task and this practice gradually develops their communication skills.

II TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching is also known as Task-Based Learning and Task-Based Instruction. Its origin is found in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and is a subcategory of it. Instructors adopted task-based language learning for various reasons. Some moved to the task-based syllabus in an endeavor to make the language in the classroom truly communicative, rather than the pseudo-communication that results from classroom activities with no direct connection to real-life situations.

Task was defined as an activity in which “the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome” (Willis, 1996, p. 23);

This method mainly focuses on successful completion of the task that is assigned to the students; As the students are motivated and determined to improve their English language skills they try to use maximum English language while they are performing the task and thus this practice leads to maximize their language usage and help them becoming masters in language. The TBLT framework consists of three main phases provides three basic conditions for language acquisition, these are pre- task, task- cycle and language focus.

2.1 Pre-task

In this stage, the instructor announces the topic and gives the learners the clear guidelines in what they will have to do the task and might help the learners in recollecting the vocabulary, phrases, and idioms that may be useful for them in the execution of the task. This stage can also include showing a recording of people doing the same task so

that learners get a clear idea of what they are expected to do the task. They can also take some ideas from the recording played and incorporate them while they are practicing the task assigned to them

2.2 Task- cycle

This stage provides the learners a chance to use whatever the language they already know simultaneously they are divided into several groups and practice the assigned task and now in this stage, they execute the task with their group members using the language resources that they have as the teacher observes and offers encouragement. Task Cycle helps learners a holistic experience of language in use. There are three mechanisms of a task cycle:

1. Task: Learners use whatever language they would like to master, working simultaneously, in pairs or small groups to achieve goals of the task.
2. Planning: Planning comes after the task and before the report. It forms the central part of the cycle. The teacher's role here is that of a language consultant. Learners arrange their reports effectively and make the most of their learning prospects.
3. Report: Reporting is the natural condition of the task cycle. In this stage, learners report the class about their findings while they are practicing the task. The instructor decides the order of when students will present their reports and may give the learners some quick feedback on the content. So the report stage gives students a natural motivation to improve and progress in their language learning process. It presents a very real linguistic challenge to communicate precisely and perfectly in language suitable to the situation.

2.3 Language Focus

This phase allows the learners to focus on some specific features of languages that occur in the process of communication and language used in text closely, so they will understand the correct usage of language in various situations. This phase has two components:

1. **Analysis:** The instructor highlights significant parts of the text of the recording for the students to analyze. The instructor may ask the learners to observe interesting features within this text. The instructor can also highlight the language that the learners used during the report phase for analysis.
2. **Practice:** Finally, the instructor selects language areas to practice based upon the needs of the students and what surfaced from the task and report phases. The students then do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

It has been observed that TBLT is a successful tool in helping the learners to master the language they are intended to. Let us examine some advantages of TBLT

III THE ADVANTAGES OF TBLT

Task-based learning has some lucid advantages:

The learners are given freedom to use the language in whatever the way they want. In all the three phases they must use all their language resources rather than just practicing one pre-selected item.

A natural context is developed from the learners' experiences with the language that is personalized and relevant to them. In PPP (presentation, practice, production) it is necessary to create contexts in which to present the language and sometimes they can be very unnatural.

The learners will have a much more varied exposure to language with TBLT. They will be exposed to a whole range of lexical phrases, collocations, and patterns as well as language forms.

The language explored arises from the students' needs. This need dictates what will be covered in the lesson rather than a decision made by the teacher or the course book.

It is a strong communicative approach where students spend a lot of time communicating. PPP lessons seem very teacher-centered by comparison.

IV TYPES OF TASK

The types of task that a language learner can use in are numerous and differ from each other in terms of what each task requires the learners to do. Willis (1996) states that there are six types of task that learners can engage in which promotes successful language learning.

1. Brain Storming and fact finding: these activities will help complete some kind of list or draft a mind map.
2. Ordering and sorting meaning: in this learners will do sequencing, categorizing, ranking and classifying.
3. Comparing meaning that learners have to search for similarities, differences and match information accordingly.
The outcome of such tasks could be items appropriately matched or assembled, or the identification of similarities and differences.
4. Problem Solving.
5. Sharing personal experiences.
6. This is creative task and includes such activities as fact finding, brainstorming, comparing, sorting, ordering and problem-solving

TBLT is mainly focused on learners' flexible usage of language and meaning rather than the form. Students take part in communicative tasks which help them work on a grammar feature. The learners work on their own expressing themselves in their writing and speaking skills. Willis (1996: 101) states "tasks and texts combine to give students a rich exposure to language and also opportunities to use it themselves".

In order for students to really appreciate and benefit from such tasks, it is very important that the teacher chooses material that will develop and challenge the different types of students. Willis (1996: 23) says the teacher should prepare tasks with "a suitable degree of intellectual and linguistic challenge and promote learners' language development as efficiently as possible".

V CONCLUSION

English is the lingua franca of this global village. Therefore, it is important for technical students to learn and master the English language to attain success in both professional and social life. The students and the teachers should contribute to this end. Acquiring subject knowledge is essential for students and the expression and presentation of the gained knowledge also are important, for this student should become proficient in language skills. The language teachers should lay more emphasis on practical approach of teaching English with pre-planned ways and completing this task with little more patience. The Task-Based Language Teaching system can be adopted by English language instructors so that the students will be motivated to work on improving their language proficiency in a stimulating environment.

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