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ANALYZING TASK-BASED WRITING APPROACHES: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND
PRACTICES**Yuldasheva Maftuna***Master's degree student in English Linguistics, Turan International University, Namangan, Uzbekistan***Ergashev Rasulbek Sohob***Master's Degree in English Linguistics, Professor of English Linguistics, Turan International University, Namangan, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Implementation, language teaching's applicability, thinking skills.**Received:** 31.01.2024**Accepted:** 05.02.2024**Published:** 10.02.2024**Abstract:** This article explores task-based approaches to university-level writing instruction, acknowledging the shift from traditional methods to prioritize meaningful communication. The introduction establishes the importance of tasks, defined as activities promoting meaningful language use in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Challenges in implementation, such as task design and assessment, are discussed, alongside insights from a research on difficulties faced by Uzbek students. Proposed lesson plans provide practical applications, emphasizing linguistic development, communicative competence, and critical thinking skills. Global perspectives, citing influential scholars, enrich the discussion, and the article concludes with a focus on addressing specific challenges in Uzbekistan. This comprehensive overview offers insights into task-based language teaching's applicability and relevance, providing valuable guidance for educators globally and addressing the unique needs of Uzbek students.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of language education has witnessed a paradigm shift towards task-based approaches to teaching writing skills, particularly in the context of university-level education (Ellis, 2003). This shift has been driven by a growing recognition of the limitations of

traditional, form-focused approaches that prioritize grammar and vocabulary over meaningful communication (Willis, 1996). Task-based approaches offer an alternative framework that emphasizes the use of language in authentic, real-world tasks, thereby promoting a more holistic and communicative approach to writing instruction.

Traditional approaches to teaching writing often focus on discrete language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, with little emphasis on the application of these skills in real-life contexts (Ellis, 2003). However, research has shown that this isolated focus on language form may not lead to effective writing proficiency, as students may struggle to apply these skills in meaningful communication situations (Willis, 1996). Task-based approaches address this limitation by placing writing tasks in authentic contexts that require students to use language creatively and purposefully to achieve specific goals (Ellis, 2003). This approach not only enhances students' writing skills but also develops their ability to communicate effectively in various academic and professional settings.

The concept of "task" is central to task-based approaches in language teaching (Ellis, 2003). Generally, a task is an activity where learners use language to achieve a specific goal, such as solving a problem or completing a project (Long, 1985). In the context of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), tasks are often defined as activities involving language use for meaningful communication (Ellis, 2003). These tasks are designed to reflect authentic writing activities that students are likely to encounter outside the classroom, such as writing emails, reports, or essays for academic or professional purposes (Willis, 1996). By engaging students in these tasks, instructors can provide them with opportunities to practice writing in contexts that are relevant and meaningful to their future academic and professional lives.

The shift towards task-based approaches in writing instruction is also aligned with the evolving needs of the modern world, where effective written communication is essential for academic success and professional advancement (Willis, 1996). Employers and academic institutions increasingly value graduates who can communicate clearly and persuasively through writing, making the development of writing skills a critical component of education (Ellis, 2003). Task-based approaches offer a way to meet these demands by focusing on the practical application of writing skills in authentic contexts, preparing students to meet the challenges of writing in the real world (Willis, 1996).

As observed by researcher R. Ergashev in a 2020 study involving up to 150 students from different demographics in Uzbekistan, academic writing skills and spoken competence were identified as significant challenges for Uzbek students and schoolchildren. This observation aligns with official IELTS and CEFR score breakdowns, revealing weaknesses, particularly in writing and speaking. Ergashev's

subsequent research in 2024 emphasizes the importance of task-based language teaching in Uzbekistan classrooms, aligning with various learning theories. Ergashev underscores that task-based approaches address the specific needs of students, offering a learner-centered strategy to enhance writing and communication skills effectively.

In the upcoming chapters, we will delve into the background of task-based language teaching, its significance in fostering linguistic and communicative competence, the challenges it presents, global perspectives on its implementation, and proposed lesson plans. These chapters aim to provide a comprehensive understanding and practical insights into the dynamic landscape of task-based writing instruction, considering the unique context and challenges faced by Uzbek students, as highlighted by Ergashev's research.

Background

The concept of "task" holds a central position in task-based approaches to language teaching. Generally defined as an activity where learners use language to achieve a specific goal, tasks encompass problem-solving or project completion (Long, 1985). Within the context of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), tasks are specifically activities involving language use for meaningful communication (Ellis, 2003). Although the more restricted communicative definition may not represent a complete consensus, the nuances surrounding the term persist (Littlewood, 2004).

For instance, the term 'task' may be extended to include free discussion, acknowledging teachers' intuitions that learning can occur without a formally assigned task. Conversely, supporting the assertion that task-based learning mirrors natural learning conditions, some argue that infants develop their mother tongue through engaging in tasks (Littlewood, 2004). However, extending the term to include spontaneous conversation and infant play might imply an unlimited concept with little meaning (Littlewood, 2004).

The significance of task-based approaches in teaching writing skills lies in their potential to foster linguistic and communicative competence (Ellis, 2003; Harmer, 2007). By engaging students in tasks mirroring real-world writing activities, these approaches aim to develop effective written communication, considering both linguistic accuracy and communicative appropriateness (Long, 1985). This emphasis becomes crucial in academic and professional settings, where effective written communication is essential.

Task-based approaches prioritize authentic language use (Willis, 1996). Simulating real-life writing situations such as reports, emails, or essays, these tasks prepare students for diverse academic and professional contexts, encouraging adaptability in writing style and language use (Ellis, 2003; Harmer, 2007).

Furthermore, these approaches promote a learner-centered approach to writing instruction (Nunan, 1989; Harmer, 2007). Instead of solely focusing on grammatical accuracy or vocabulary acquisition, the emphasis shifts to developing students' communicative abilities. Encouraging language creativity fosters an active and engaging learning environment, essential for building confidence and autonomy in writing skills (Willis, 1996; Harmer, 2007).

Beyond linguistic and communicative competence, task-based approaches contribute to the development of critical thinking skills (Bygate, 2001). Writing tasks requiring analysis, argument evaluation, or persuasive viewpoints practice both writing and critical thinking, enhancing effective communication and problem-solving skills valued in academic and professional settings.

In summary, the significance of task-based approaches in teaching writing skills lies in their ability to prepare students for real-world tasks, promote a learner-centered approach, and foster the development of linguistic and communicative competence, along with critical thinking skills (Schmidt, 1990).

Difficulties

Despite the potential benefits, implementing task-based approaches in writing instruction can pose several challenges. One of the main difficulties is designing tasks that are both authentic and pedagogically effective (Nunan, 1989; Harmer, 2007). Finding tasks that are engaging and relevant to students' interests while also meeting specific learning objectives can be a complex task for instructors (Nunan, 1989). According to Harmer (2007), ensuring tasks are not only authentic but also aligned with students' interests is crucial for effective language learning.

Another challenge is the assessment of students' performance in task-based writing (Long, 1983). Unlike traditional assessments that may focus primarily on grammar and vocabulary, assessing task-based writing requires the evaluation of multiple language skills and competencies within the context of a single task (Ellis, 2003). This holistic assessment approach can be more time-consuming and challenging for instructors, as it involves analyzing students' language use, communication strategies, coherence, and task achievement, among other aspects.

Furthermore, integrating task-based approaches into existing curricula and educational frameworks can be challenging (Willis, 1996). Educators may encounter resistance from institutional stakeholders or colleagues who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods (Willis, 1996). Harmer (2007) discusses the challenges of integrating innovative methods into established educational systems and emphasizes the importance of professional development for instructors to effectively implement task-based approaches.

Additionally, ensuring that task-based writing instruction remains learner-centered and promotes meaningful engagement can be a challenge (Nunan, 1989). It requires instructors to create a supportive learning environment where students feel motivated to participate actively in tasks, collaborate with their peers, and take ownership of their learning. Harmer (2007) emphasizes the role of the teacher in creating a positive and engaging classroom atmosphere that encourages student participation and interaction.

Furthermore, providing effective feedback on task-based writing can be demanding for instructors (Willis, 1996). Given the multifaceted nature of task-based writing, providing feedback that addresses both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness requires a nuanced approach (Ellis, 2003). Harmer (2007) discusses the importance of constructive feedback that promotes not only language form but also meaningful communication and critical thinking. Instructors need to balance corrective feedback on language form with feedback that encourages students to think critically about their writing, a complex task that requires a deep understanding of students' individual needs and learning processes.

Global perspectives and practices

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained increasing recognition as a highly effective approach in English Language Teaching (ELT). Prominent scholars such as Prabhu (1987), Nunan (1989), and Willis (1996) have contributed significant definitions and insights into its implementation.

Prabhu's influential work in the Bangalore Madras Project laid the foundation for TBLT, focusing on the central role of tasks in language learning. Prabhu (1987) defines a task as "an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process" (p. 24). This definition emphasizes the cognitive processes involved in task completion, highlighting the learner's engagement with meaningful language use to achieve a specific goal.

Nunan (1989) builds on Prabhu's work by emphasizing the communicative nature of tasks. He defines a task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (p. 10). Nunan's definition underscores the importance of meaningful communication in task-based activities, where learners focus on conveying and understanding messages rather than solely on linguistic structures.

Willis (1996) further develops the concept of tasks by highlighting their role in promoting language use for communicative purposes. According to Willis, "tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (p. 23). She emphasizes the authentic nature of tasks, positioning them as essential tools for creating real purposes for language use and providing natural contexts for language study.

The TBLT framework encompasses three main phases: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. The pre-task phase introduces learners to the topic and activates relevant vocabulary. The task cycle offers learners the opportunity to engage in language use through a holistic approach, followed by planning and reporting stages. The language focus phase allows for a more detailed examination of language features that emerged during the task cycle, promoting reflective analysis and consolidation of language skills (Willis, 1986, p. 75).

In addition to Prabhu, Nunan, and Willis, several other scholars have made significant contributions to the development and understanding of TBLT. Michael Long has emphasized the role of input and interaction in second language acquisition, highlighting the importance of tasks that facilitate authentic communication and meaningful interaction (Long, 1983). Rod Ellis has focused on the theoretical underpinnings of TBLT, emphasizing the role of task complexity in promoting language development and encouraging learners to use language creatively (Ellis, 2003).

Richard Schmidt's research has emphasized the importance of tasks that provide learners with comprehensible and engaging input, facilitating natural language understanding and development (Schmidt, 1990). Martin Bygate has explored the processes involved in task-based language production, highlighting the significance of tasks in promoting language fluency and creativity, encouraging learners to express themselves effectively (Bygate, 2001). Merrill Swain has focused on the concept of language output and its role in language learning, stressing the importance of tasks that encourage learners to produce language in meaningful ways, facilitating the practice and refinement of language skills (Swain, 1985). These scholars' collective contributions have significantly enriched the theoretical

foundations and practical applications of TBLT, emphasizing the importance of authentic communication, meaningful tasks, and natural language development in language education. Their work continues to shape the evolving landscape of language teaching and learning worldwide.

TBLT has been implemented in diverse global contexts, reflecting its adaptability and effectiveness in language education. In many countries, educators and policymakers have recognized the value of TBLT in addressing the needs of language learners by providing them with opportunities to use the target language in authentic and purposeful ways. The implementation of TBLT varies across different global contexts, influenced by factors such as educational policies, teacher training, and available resources.

TBLT has been integrated into national language curricula as a means to enhance communicative skills and promote language proficiency in some regions. In others, it has been adopted as a supplementary approach within language programs or as part of innovative teaching initiatives. One of the strengths of TBLT is its ability to cater to the diverse needs and backgrounds of language learners. By focusing on tasks that are relevant and engaging, TBLT encourages learners to actively participate in language learning and use the language in meaningful ways. This approach aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching, which emphasizes the importance of language use in authentic contexts.

As TBLT continues to evolve, educators and researchers around the world are exploring its potential in addressing new challenges in language education, such as the integration of technology, the development of digital literacy skills, and the promotion of intercultural communication. Global perspectives on TBLT highlight its adaptability and relevance in addressing the dynamic needs of language learners in an increasingly interconnected world.

PROPOSED LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Understanding Wealth Disparities through Argumentative Essay

Writing Objective: Students will be able to construct an argumentative essay on the topic of wealth disparities, analyze persuasive strategies, and propose solutions to address the issue.

Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction (5 minutes):

- Welcome and introduce the lesson's focus on wealth disparities.

- Discuss the significance of addressing social issues through argumentative writing.

2. Pre-Task Activities (15 minutes):

- **Activity 1: Writing about Wealth Gap (7 minutes)**

- In groups, students write five sentences highlighting examples of wealth disparities.
- Share and discuss the sentences, emphasizing the real-world implications of economic inequality.

- **Activity 2: Reorganizing Sentences (8 minutes)**

- Given a disorganized paragraph on wealth disparities, students work individually to correctly arrange the sentences.
- Discuss the importance of coherent structure in conveying arguments.

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

1. The consequences of such economic disparities are far-reaching and affect various aspects of people's lives.
2. Governments and policymakers need to implement measures that promote economic equality and social justice.
3. In today's society, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening at an alarming rate.
4. Wealth disparities can lead to disparities in education, healthcare, and access to basic amenities.
5. To address this issue effectively, understanding the root causes of wealth gaps is crucial.
6. This has led to increased social tension and a growing sense of inequality.

3. Educative Part: Argumentative Essay Writing (10 minutes):

- Present the structure of an argumentative essay.
- Provide examples of the same essay written at A2, B1, and B2 English levels.

SAMPLE ESSAY EXTRACTS:

A2 Level: In our world today, there are rich people and poor people. The rich have a lot of money, while the poor don't have much. This is not good because it makes life difficult for the poor. The poor may not have good houses or enough food to eat. They also may not get good education or healthcare. It is

important for everyone to have the same opportunities and be treated fairly. Governments should help make things more equal.

B1 Level: In contemporary society, there exists a significant gap between those with substantial wealth and those with limited financial resources. This disparity has led to noticeable social tensions and an increasing sense of inequality. The consequences of such economic gaps are broad-reaching, influencing various aspects of individuals' lives. Addressing this issue effectively requires a deep understanding of its root causes. Governments and policymakers play a crucial role in implementing measures that promote economic equality and social justice. It is imperative to bridge the wealth gap to ensure equal opportunities for all members of society.

B2 Level: In the current global landscape, wealth disparities have become a prominent concern, marked by an alarming widening gap between the affluent and the impoverished. This socioeconomic imbalance has given rise to palpable social tensions and a pervasive sense of inequality. The repercussions of such economic divides extend across multiple dimensions of individuals' lives, encompassing disparities in education, healthcare, and access to basic amenities. To effectively tackle this issue, a nuanced comprehension of the root causes of wealth gaps is indispensable. Governments and policymakers bear the responsibility of implementing comprehensive measures that not only address the symptoms but also target the systemic issues contributing to inequality. The pursuit of economic equality and social justice stands as an imperative, ensuring that all members of society can access equal opportunities and contribute meaningfully to the collective welfare.

- Discuss key elements, including thesis statements, supporting evidence, and counterarguments.

4. Translation Activity (10 minutes):

- Students, in turn, translate each paragraph of the example essays, depending on their English level, to reinforce understanding.
- Facilitate a discussion on linguistic challenges and choices in translation.

5. Video Presentation (8 minutes):

- Play a video depicting the living conditions of the economically disadvantaged.
- Discuss the emotional and factual impact of the video.

6. Matching Sentence Beginnings and Endings Exercise (7 minutes):

- Distribute an exercise matching sentence beginnings and endings related to the video.

SAMPLE TASK:

Sentence Beginnings (A-F):

- A. The widening wealth gap has led to
- B. Addressing wealth disparities requires
- C. Governments play a crucial role in
- D. Economic inequality is reflected in
- E. Disparities in education, healthcare, and amenities are
- F. Bridging the wealth gap is essential for

Sentence Endings (1-6):

- 1. promoting economic equality and social justice.
 - 2. a pervasive sense of inequality in society.
 - 3. the root causes of wealth gaps.
 - 4. a crucial step toward equal opportunities.
 - 5. various aspects of individuals' lives.
 - 6. implementing measures that ensure fairness.
- Discuss the exercise, reinforcing comprehension and interpretation skills.

7. Open Discussion on Solutions (12 minutes):

- Divide the class into groups.
- Each group brainstorms and discusses solutions to alleviate wealth disparities.
- Encourage critical thinking and consideration of the broader societal impact of proposed solutions.

8. Model Essay Construction (8 minutes):

- Provide multiple-choice, sentence completion tasks whose answers construct a well-written model essay.
- Discuss the correct answers collectively, emphasizing effective argumentation and language use.

9. Homework Assignment (Group Project Presentation):

- Each group prepares a presentation on their proposed solutions.
- Presentations should include well-reasoned arguments and potential outcomes.

10. Independent Essay Writing (As Homework):

- Each student writes an argumentative essay on wealth disparities using the skills learned in class.
- Emphasize the incorporation of persuasive strategies and evidence-based reasoning.

Assessment:

- Participation in Pre-Task Activities: Assess active engagement and contribution during the writing and reorganizing activities.
- Translation Activity: Evaluate individual understanding of argumentative essay elements through translation.
- Video and Matching Exercise: Gauge comprehension and interpretation skills through discussions and completion of matching exercises.
- Open Discussion: Evaluate critical thinking and collaborative skills during group discussions on solutions.
- Model Essay Construction: Assess comprehension and application of argumentative essay components through correct completion of multiple-choice tasks.
- Group Project Presentation: Evaluate the quality of proposals and the ability to present cohesive arguments.
- Independent Essay: Assess individual application of learned skills in constructing an argumentative essay on wealth disparities.

Lesson Plan 2: Analyzing and Responding to Academic Texts

Objective: Students will be able to analyze an academic text and respond by writing a summary and critical reflection.

Materials Needed:

- Academic text relevant to the course or subject matter

Lesson Outline:

1. Preparation (10 minutes):

- Explain the task: students will write a summary of the text followed by a critical reflection.
- Provide guidelines for writing a summary, emphasizing the need to condense the main ideas and arguments in their own words.
- Discuss the elements of a critical reflection, such as evaluating the text's strengths and weaknesses, and relating it to broader academic discussions.

2. Reading and Annotation (20 minutes):

- Provide students with an academic text related to their course or subject matter.
- Instruct students to read the text carefully, highlighting key points, arguments, and any unfamiliar vocabulary.

3. Writing the Summary (30 minutes):

- Ask students to write a summary of the text, focusing on the main ideas and arguments.
- Encourage them to use their own words and to be concise.

4. Writing the Critical Reflection (30 minutes):

- After completing the summary, instruct students to write a critical reflection on the text.
- Encourage them to consider the text's strengths and weaknesses, its relevance to the course or subject matter, and any questions or critiques they may have.

5. Peer Review and Discussion (20 minutes):

- Pair students to exchange their summaries and critical reflections.
- Ask them to provide constructive feedback to each other, focusing on clarity, coherence, and the depth of analysis.

6. Conclusion (10 minutes):

- Wrap up the lesson by discussing the importance of analyzing academic texts critically and the skills developed through this task.

Purpose: This lesson aims to develop students' skills in analyzing academic texts, summarizing complex ideas, and critically reflecting on academic content. By engaging in this task, students will practice essential academic writing skills and deepen their understanding of course materials.

Lesson Plan 3: Analyzing and Responding to Short Stories

Objective: Students will be able to analyze a short story and respond by writing a literary analysis essay.

Materials Needed:

- Short story (e.g., "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson)

Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction to Literary Analysis (15 minutes):

- Explain the purpose of literary analysis: to examine how literary elements contribute to the overall theme and meaning of a text.
- Discuss key terms and concepts related to literary analysis, such as plot, character, setting, and theme.

2. Reading and Annotation (30 minutes):

- Provide students with a short story, such as "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson.
- Instruct students to read the story carefully, taking notes on key literary elements and their interpretations.

3. Group Discussion (20 minutes):

- Divide students into small groups to discuss their interpretations of the story.
- Encourage them to share their insights on the story's themes, characters, and plot developments.

4. Writing the Literary Analysis Essay (40 minutes):

- Ask students to write a literary analysis essay on the short story.

- Provide guidelines for structuring the essay, including an introduction, body paragraphs focusing on specific literary elements, and a conclusion.
5. Peer Review and Revision (20 minutes):
- Pair students to exchange their essays for peer review.
 - Instruct them to provide feedback on each other's essays, focusing on the clarity of analysis and the use of textual evidence.
6. Conclusion (15 minutes):
- Conclude the lesson by discussing the importance of close reading and critical thinking in literary analysis.
 - Encourage students to apply these skills to other literary texts they encounter.

Purpose: This lesson aims to develop students' skills in analyzing literary texts, identifying key literary elements, and constructing coherent and persuasive arguments in their writing. By engaging in this task, students will enhance their critical thinking skills and deepen their appreciation for literature.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of task-based approaches to teaching writing skills, as presented in this comprehensive guide, reveals a transformative shift in language education. This paradigmatic evolution, driven by the limitations of traditional form-focused methods, underscores the significance of fostering authentic and meaningful communication through writing. The examination of the concept of "task" within the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework emphasizes its pivotal role in engaging learners in real-world writing activities.

The journey through the challenges associated with implementing task-based approaches sheds light on the complexities faced by educators. Designing authentic and pedagogically effective tasks, assessing multifaceted student performances, and integrating innovative methods into existing curricula emerge as formidable obstacles. However, these challenges are met with the potential for profound benefits, such as fostering linguistic and communicative competence, promoting critical thinking skills, and creating a learner-centered approach to writing instruction.

A global perspective on Task-Based Language Teaching demonstrates its adaptability and effectiveness in diverse educational landscapes. The contributions of scholars like Prabhu, Nunan, Willis, Long, Ellis,

Schmidt, Bygate, and Swain have enriched the theoretical foundations and practical applications of TBLT. The flexibility of TBLT implementation across various global contexts reflects its alignment with the principles of communicative language teaching and its potential to address the dynamic needs of language learners in an interconnected world.

The proposed lesson plans serve as practical frameworks for incorporating task-based approaches into writing instruction. These lessons focus on addressing real-world issues, analyzing academic texts, and engaging with literary works, providing students with opportunities to apply their language skills in meaningful and relevant contexts. The emphasis on participation, critical thinking, and collaboration in these lessons aligns with the learner-centered philosophy inherent in task-based approaches.

In conclusion, the journey through the background, difficulties, global perspectives, and proposed lesson plans showcases the transformative power of task-based approaches in teaching writing skills. By embracing these approaches, educators can navigate the challenges, capitalize on the benefits, and contribute to a dynamic and effective language education landscape that prepares students for success in diverse academic and professional contexts.

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