

TASK BASED METHOD-A BETTER WAY OF LEARNING LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

While the prolific grammarians are busy in defining, *What is a 'task'?*, a question that has never been answered with a proper justification and trying to attach it with verb forms or prepositions, but an average student is unconcerned with it and imagines it as a gap-fill activity of their language learning process, which requires learners to argue about the possible explanation to an enigma a 'task'? It's impossible to ignore how important task based method has impact on the learners while learning English language in a stress free ambience.

Key Words: Task, Learning Method

Introduction:

Defining 'task' has always been a serious bone of contention among English instructors at various junctures, at staffrooms, at debates, at academic discussions etc. But a question that's less habitually deliberated is what a student considers a task to be, and how far are they aware of being part of one. As mentioned above they think its completing a gap-fill as a 'task'; some may find it as a very challenging 'task' (or not). But many students might consider a 'task' as a discussion and trying to frame out the possible solution to a riddle a diverting (interesting, amusing, etc) pastime, but unfortunately they fail to realise the significance of language learning aim involved internally within it.

Best illustration of students having a little knowledge towards the aim of a task in the part of language learning is given below, with reference to a common activity: "You are going to the North Pole - choose a maximum of ten items from the following list of twenty five that will you take." A typical student interaction might be:

Student A: Water?

Student B: Yes.

Student A: Food?

Student B: Ha ha.! Ok.

Student A: Tent?

Student B: Ok. Etc.,

The activity has the aim of developing conversation and interaction among the students, but in return it turns out to be a mere exchange of words. The central motive of the activity 'communication' has not been developed and fulfilled to the expected extent. Their main focus has been to pass on their ideas rather than on discussion and collaboration.

What went wrong with this 'task' then? Noticeably the pupils were in mistaken assumption that they have to solve the problem as quickly as possible, but not to try to understand the intention behind it and justify the activity. Whereas quite possibly the students were anticipated to use a structure such as: 'If we don't take the water, we may get dehydrated', or even: 'If we didn't take the tent, we'd freeze to death'. The lack of understanding of students towards what they are expected to do has bring down the whole ambition of the teacher. Sometimes it may be the teacher had not made this pre-selection of structures clear to the students in the first place. In other words, they were blind towards the teacher's linguistic aim in engaging them in the 'task'?

However, a 'task' involving students differentiating between the uses of certain verb forms in a gap-fill, for example, may well be less predictable linguistically and might go something as follows:

Student A: I think we need the future perfect here.

Student B: No, I don't think so. Look it says 'in 2026' - you use the present perfect when the date is given.

Student A: Oh? Well, Ok. Are you sure about that?

Student B: Yes. I read about it in my reference grammar app.

Student A: Really? Which grammar app is that?

Student B: I forget the name, it's the one with the speaker's image.

Student A: I don't know that one. Mine's got a headphones image.

Student B: Green? Yes, I've seen a headphones image one. I was browsing through the playstore yesterday for reference to other related apps. It was senseless?

Student A: What was?

Student B: The library, ha ha! - no, sorry - I meant the app image was.

Although the example provided is fictional, this type of exchange is common among students failing to get the right altitude of the activity. Students expressed their opinions in what made them comfortable and whichever method took less time, as they were nervous to be at the centre stage but they were expected to apply the 'meaning focused' and 'form focused' communication which has great insight into the levels of involvement of the activity explained.

The main component for the success of the 'Task Based Learning' has been intended to make students express themselves without any preoccupation with the forms concerned and majorly with the assistance of the linguistic features the teacher has decided to help the students notice while performing the task without any confusion and lack of interest. Creating interest among the participants towards the activity is the major leap for bringing a student's wholesome concentration on what's going to happen inside the classroom. Making students realise that they play a major role in the revolutionary idealization of the language learning, can create a lively ambience in the classroom.

Having been interacted with a good number of teachers and instructors in the elaborate career of teaching has made me realise the variant perceptions and myths that exist in the minds of the students towards the tasks being performed in a classroom. The linguists and researchers have long been doing critical examination towards Communicative Language Learning/Teaching as part of classroom activity to identify how far the students are able to perceive the need for a linguistic form which will result in a firmer retention of that form once provided by the teacher or another source (for more on this argument see Wilkins 1976). But the question that remains to exist among the minds is that how useful these tasks are for student in fulfilling the 'task' without perceiving any linguistic need?

Our students are real and they can play an equally important role in making an activity successful though they are not much aware of the solid intentions behind the task. They too can contribute to the activity at a different dimensional level for example, they can attain a different discourse on North Pole necessities if they knew what the task was all about - after all, it is not too likely that many of them will ever pack a rucksack and head off there. Instead of advocating the traditionally accepted view of PPP here, we can give loose ends to the students welcoming their idea towards how to take the task forward, but also more a 'let them know what you are doing' view to teachers. More importantly: 'let them know why you are doing it' - their views may be less ELT fashionable than instructors methodology, but, valid from students perception. And, if they know why they are engaged in a task - riddle solving, completing a gap-fill, or painting a fence - they might just gain a bit more from it.

A task based method to learning language has become more prominent than the orthodox way of teaching as it helped the reserved and other in-active students in the classroom realise that learning language is fun rather than a burden on their shoulders. A student's capacity can be brought into lime light when they take the lead in language learning rather than depending on their teachers or instructors.

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