



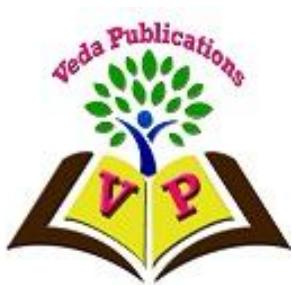
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TASK- BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT



The present paper discusses the vitality of Task-based Language Teaching approach in shaping up the dialogic communication of learners. It also unfolds the real life experiences of learners who used various tasks for effective dialogic conversation.

Dialogic communication is very important in academic sphere and social parameters as well. An effective understanding of the concepts articulated by the speaker would be possible through proper dialogic communication. In order to develop dialogic communication in students, a practical approach which emphasizes on real world tasks is very much preferable in teaching and learning academia.

The present study brings in the merits of task-based language teaching in developing the dialogic conversation skills of regional medium learners in Andhra Pradesh, as part of their second language acquisition. It has four sections in which the first section introduces the usefulness of task-based language teaching ,the second section presents the details of the procedure of the study , the third section presents the results of the study and the final section concludes the entire discussion the of the paper.

Keywords: TBLT: Task- Based Language Teaching, GMT: Grammar-Translation Method.



INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a brief discussion on the role played by Task-based Language teaching in shaping up the 'dialogic conversation' of regional medium learners, in Andhra Pradesh. Task –based language teaching is an advanced communicative method, which is being used very effectively in language learning scenario. Its positive effect has spread to many teaching and learning contexts. TBLT was made very popular by N.S Prabhu, when he was working for his Bangalore project. TBLT, which is an offshoot of communicative language teaching, lays its focus on functional use of language.

In TBLT, the central idea is to promote language while learners are actively engaged in a task. As students are involved in the task, they will have an urge to produce language as per its requirement. Theorists like Light brown and Spada view that, communicative tasks have goals to focus on conversation and the use of target language (Brown& Spada, 1999). Yes, it is very much true that learners imbibe language as they practice it everyday in communicative tasks. They opine (Brown& Spada) that when learners are given a chance to involve in meaningful activity, they would express their thoughts and intentions in order to negotiate meaning.

TBLT AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

It is true that TBLT fits into the paradigm of second language learning for achieving its objectives. If tasks are designed in such a way that the learners can process the language chunks by the time they complete the tasks, they can acquire enough amount of language at the end of the task cycle. The reason is that, it gets assimilated and converted into effective language when students use that language as part of their task completion. In order to achieve such goals, the tasks need to be meaningful and have real world connection. Ellis discusses what entails a task: 1) meaning is an essential and top most factor of a good task, 2) there needs to be a gap for expressing their opinions, conveying the information and to infer meaning. 3) Learners would rely on their language to complete a task. 4) When tasks are the input providers to students carrying the essential information for communicative use, it is possible for students to acquire second language without much difficulty (Ellis, 2003). These are some essential traits

which constitute a good task. Further, he goes on to say that individual differences of students like, language aptitude, learning style and other learning strategies have an important role in second language learning (Skehan, 1998).

WHY TBLT FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

As TBLT creates contextual situations for students to learn and practice second language, it is preferable to make use of tasks to teach language lessons. The authentic use of language is possible through this and also students get immersed in task completion, learning various language structures. TBLT is a great deviation from the traditional structure of teaching. In the traditional method, students get involved in understanding the grammar structure through drilling, imitating and memorizing but in TBLT students understand the structures as they get involved in tasks. Here they get to absorb the structure of grammar by the practical use of language through tasks. In GMT, students are not directly involved in tasks but in TBLT students are at the centre of learning and pragmatically involved in tasks for language acquisition. Nunan offers the meaning of communicative tasks in the following words, 'a communicative task engages learners in understanding, communicating in the target language when students' attention is focused on the meaning rather than the form' (Nunan, 1989). Yes, it is true that when learners are highly involved in the task, they would use the target language as much as they can, while concentrating on the meaning they are conveying. Here, their attention is on the meaning rather than the form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research study, conducted in regional medium classroom was to develop dialogic conversational patterns in learners. The subjects of the study were slow learners and inarticulate. They could not converse with each other in anyway. So, the researcher had developed role pattern tasks to improve their dialogic conversational skills using Task-based language teaching in a rural medium school. In order to equip them with interactional competence, the researcher had taken up this experimental study using TBLT.



PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh. The target learners were from regional medium school. They hailed from poor background in terms of finances and academics. The study was carried out by the researcher for a period of one and half months.

There were four types of research instruments used in the study. They are 1) pre test and post test, 2) classroom observation, 3) Questionnaire, 4) semi-structured interviews. Through these tests (pre test and post test) the researcher could diagnose the problems of the learners and thereby provide a solution to them by teaching dialogic conversational skills through the implementation of TBLT. The second research instrument used in the study was classroom observation. Through this tool, a lot of information was gathered about the learning behavior of students, teaching strategies and many other aspects. The third tool of the research study was questionnaire. The questionnaire explored necessary information about the learning experiences of the students. The final tool of the research study was semi-structured interview. Students were interviewed very informally by the researcher to elicit a lot of academic information from the students. Applying all these research tools, the study was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, the researcher gave them a pretest to observe their interactional competence. The type of tasks that were given to students was sharing personal experiences and opinion task. So, the students were engaged in role play tasks in the class. The results of the pre-task were recorded. The minimum percentage of marks in pre test was 25%. This result of the pre-test moved the researcher to carry out a further research by undertaking intervention classes to improve their turn-taking devices, role patterns, body language and intonation as part of dialogic conversational skills.

In the second phase of the research study, the researcher had to intervene in the learning process of students with the intervention tasks through TBLT teaching. It took 10 days for the researcher to teach them the role patterns, body language, good intonation patterns, comprehension

signals and formal and informal usage of language. Richards and Rogers observe three theoretical perspectives of language. They are structural, functional and interactional. The role playing techniques originates from the interactional perspective (Richards & Rogers, 2001). This method provides a view that language is a means for the realization of social relationships and transactions between humans. Following all these conceptual aspects in intervention teaching, the researcher developed role playing tasks. This study was an attempt to build an effective relationships (in the society) and exchange of views among the participants. The role playing tasks like 'a bus driver and a passenger', 'teacher and a student' and many other role play tasks shaped students' body language, intonation and dialogic conversational skills of the students.

In the final phase of the study, the researcher tested the performance of students by administering post tests, after the intervention stage, to check if any role patterns, body language and dialogic conversational ability were developed. To accomplish this target, 5 post-test tasks were given to students and later their performance was evaluated. The minimum percentage of marks in pretest was 25% and the maximum percentage of marks of the student's score was 66%. Thus, the results of the study proved that the students achieved dialogic conversational skills up to 66%. An extensive and prolonged study with TBLT would have achieved more than 66%.

To conclude the entire argument of this paper, TBLT has fetched better results in the academic life of regional medium learners. Students could attain the capability of 'dialogic conversation' up to some extent though not completely. Excellent results in this area can be attained by an extensive research through TBLT.

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