THE APPLICATION OF TASK-BASED LEARNING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

In this paper the writer briefly focuses on how to apply the task-based learning for the students who are studying English at the secondary schools in Indonesia. The writer identifies the concept, the procedure and the advantages of task-based learning which are closely related to the English curriculum of 2013. Through task-based learning, it is hoped that students will learn the language with meaning focus and try to use the language as a medium of communication. The model of task used in the classroom could be in form of seeking information, apologizing, expressing likes and dislikes, etc. Teacher should select various classroom activities as a task for the students to maximize opportunities to use English in a communicative way for meaningful activities. However, focussing on grammar is still possible because disregarding of grammatical form will virtually guarantee breakdown in communication, so the teacher might teach grammar less systematically and try to be integratedly with other four language skills. Authentic materials for task-based learning which are taken from newspapers and magazine articles, poems, manuals, recipes, telephone directories, videos, news bulletins, discussion programs are strongly recommended. Each task-based instruction should consist of two tasks: 'pre-task' and 'task' and they are divided into three steps: pre activity, while activity, and post activity.The types of tasks could be information gap activity, reasoning gap activity, and opinion gap activity.

A. Introduction

This paper presents an overview of Task Based Learning (TBL). The writer provides a brief definition, the language theory behind TBL, and TBL's advantages and disadvantages. A teaching lesson is included to illustrate this method. Task-based learning is different from other more traditional methods of language teaching. Lessons are constructed according to the language required to perform specific tasks rather than according to the aspects of language such as structures and vocabulary. According to Ramirez (1995), solving these tasks means that learning the target language will be the means to an end rather than the goal itself. This assumes that students will learn the language structures through induction as they focus on task completion and meaning. Students' interaction during the tasks facilitates transfer of information they have previously learned and incorporates it with new information they receive as they perform the task. In other words, task-based learning used in the classrom

language learning for meaning focussed activities which aimed : (1) to bring about in the classroom a preoccupation in learners with meaning and an effort to cope with communication, and (2) to avoid preselection of language and form-focussed activity.

Many language experts such as Krashen(1982), Prabhu (1982), Nunan (1988) and Tomlinson (1990) rejected any explicit teaching of grammatical items and believed that learners acquired second language structures through an unconscious process which is best facilitated when their attention is focussed on meaning. The learners are given an activity based on tasks which require the learners to use English to solve the problems of a task. The problems introduced in specific tasks such as reading a time table, or a map, which require the learners to interpret language data. White (1988) points out that this method based on tasks which engage the learners in a thinking process, the focus of which is the completion of the task rather than learning the language. It is hoped that the learners can develop their internal system of language by performing a task-based activity. This means that the learners are encouraged to say what they need and want through performing activity. Their language derived from that activity will not be systematic in the sense that it does not follow the sequence items imposed in the structural syllabus.The English Syllabus of 2013 focuses on the use of English for communication by using various activities such as information gap, opinion gap, and problem solving which can provide students more oportunity to use English in the classroom. Therefore, Task-based learning will become more advantageous to the students, it is more student-centered, allows for more meaningful communication, and often provsides for practical extra-linguistic skill building.

B. The Curriculum of 2013

The curriculum as a set of lesson plans has to be continuously improved and refined to become   better and more dynamic than ever before. The curriculum improvement in Indonesia has been continuously done in accordance with the times and the needs of the community, for example the 1975 curriculum had been changed into the 1984 curriculum. then it was revised to become the 1994 curriculum. The 1994 curriculum was changed again to the 2004 curriculum called Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). This curriculum which had not been applied at schools was revised again to become Education Unit Level Curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*) called the Curriculum of 2006 and now it has been ultimately refined into the curriculum of 2013.

The reasons of revising the 2006 curriculum to become the curriculum of 2013 are as follows:

1. The Content of the curriculum is too large indicated by the number of subjects and the breadth of material that the difficulty level exceeded the level of development of the students' age.

2. The competency-based curriculum is not yet fully applied in accordance with the demands of the functions and objectives of national education.

3. The competence is not holistically described in the domains of attitude, skills and existing knowledge.

4. Some of the competencies required in accordance with the development needs (for example: character education, methodology, active learning, the balance of soft skills and hard skills, entrepreneurship) have not been accommodated in the curriculum.

5. The curriculum has not been sensitive and responsive to the social changes that occur at the local, national, and global.

6. Standard learning process has not been described in the sequence of learning and detailed thus allowing diverse interpretations that led to the teacher-centered learning.

7. Standard learning process has not led to a competency-based assessment (process and results) and not explicitly demanded a remediation periodically.

8. The competency-based curriculum requires more detailed curriculum documents so as not to cause multiple interpretations. (Sutjipto Puskurbuk, Research Agency, Kemdikbud)

The curriculum of 2013 was announced in 2013, but its implementation was first started in July 2014 and it was implemented for certain schools as pilot projects. This curriculum is called as student-centered process based curriculum which applies the principles of PKG *(Pemantapan Kerja Guru 'strengthening teachers' work')* approach. What is meant by a student-centered process based curriculum is that the curriculum is not only objective-based and product-oriented but also stresses on process, that is how the students achieve the objectives is more important than what they achieve. They are encouraged to be more active and creative through performing various classroom activities which require to be student-centered. In English teaching, this curriculum focuses on the use of English for communication. It means that English is used to convey messages and meaningful information from one individual to other people. The English curriculum of 2013 has been very closely related to the task-based learning which had been applied by Prabhu in India.

C. **The concept of the English Syllabus of 2013**

The English Syllabus tries to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication where the English teachers should try to create a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. The teachers should leave their students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. The characteristics of the approach used in the English Syllabus of 2013 are described as follows:

1. Focuses on language as a medium of communication. It means that all communication has a social purpose - learner has something to say or find out.
2. Communication has certain functions such as seeking information/ apologizing/ expressing likes and dislikes, etc and notions such as apologizing for being late / asking where the nearest post office is.
3. Classroom activities maximize opportunities for students to use English in a communicative way for meaningful activities.
4. Use English as normal medium for classroom management and instruction - reflects naturalistic language acquisition.
5. The approach used in the English Syllabus of 2013 is much more students-orientated, because the English teaching materials will be dictated by students' needs and interests.
6. Classroom should provide opportunities for rehearsal of real-life situations and provide opportunity for real communication
7. More emphasis on active modes of learning, including pair-work and group-work
8. Emphasis on speaking and listening skills in the classroom. Contact time with language is all-important - paves way for more fluid command of the language / facility and ease of expression.
9. Errors are a natural part of learning language. Learners trying their best to use the language creatively and spontaneously are bound to make errors. Constant correction is unnecessary and even counter-productive. Correction should be discreet / noted by teacher - let them talk and express themselves - form of language becomes secondary.

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10. This approach is not just limited to oral skills. Reading and writing skills need to be developed to promote students' confidence in all four skill areas.

11. Grammar can still be taught, but less systematically, in traditional ways alongside more innovative approaches. Recognized that communication depends on grammar. Disregard of grammatical form will virtually guarantee breakdown in communication.

12. Materials must relate to students' own lives / must be fresh and real

13. This approach also seeks to use authentic resources, more interesting and motivating. In Foreign language classroom authentic texts serve as partial substitute for community of native speakers. Newspaper and magazine articles, poems, manuals, recipes, telephone directories, videos, news bulletins, discussion programs - all can be exploited in variety of ways.

The concept of the English Syllabus of 2013 which is closely related to the *PKG* approach (Bewa: 2013) is actually adopted from a communicative approach based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. The students should be involved in real communication so that they can use their natural strategies for language acquisition. This condition will allow them to learn to use the language. This approach aimed at providing students opportunities in the classroom to engage in real-life communication in the target language. The approach of communicative language teaching actually had been introduced to the English teachers through *PKG* project in Indonesian secondary school context. Various teaching techniques has been introduced and applied at schools such as Total Physical Response (TPR), Presentation Practice Production (PPP), Experience Generalization Reinforcement Application (EGRA), Practice Generalization Production (PGP) and many other communication activities such as solving a problem, telling a story, chain writing, chain dialogues, jigsaw reading, jigsaw listening, parallel reading, parallel listening, language games, role play, and scenario. All those activities are emphasized on improving the students' ability to communicate in English. Students are encouraged to use English in meaningful and purposes ways either in the classroom or outside classroom (Tomlinson 1986). By implementing the English syllabus of 2013, it is hoped that the English teachers of secondary schools of Indonesia will not feel hasitate to apply the communicative approach in their classroom and it is also relevant to the concept of Task- Based- Language Learning.

D. The Concept of Task-Based- Learning

Task based learning is a different way to teach languages. It can help the students by placing them in a situation like in the real world. A situation where oral communication is essential for doing a specific task. Task based learning has the advantage of getting the students to use their skills at their current level. To help the development of language through its use. It has the advantage of getting the focus of the students toward achieving a goal where language becomes a tool, making the use of language necessity. Task-based learning consists of a set of tasks which should be done by the students in the language classroom. The tasks designed are neither based on linguistic preselection nor on any explicitly language focused-activity. In other words, they are only focusing on meaning rather than on form such as solving a problem where the students need to think in order to solve it. Each lesson generally consists of two tasks: 'pre-task' and 'task'. Both tasks are quite similar in the sense that they demand a similar process of reasoning, or consist of a similar sequence of questions. In TBL the learner should be exposed to as much of the foreign language as possible in order to merely observe the foreign language, then hypothesize over it, and that is individually, and finally experiment with it.

TBL is based on Krashen's language acquisition hypothesis. Krahnke (1987) restates it thus: the theory asserts "the ability to use a language is gained through exposure to and participation in using it, that experience, not training, is necessary". Krahnke (1987) goes on to explain that TBL develops "communicative competence, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence". Processing the information used during specific tasks through understandable input provides students with linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Discourse competence is gained by the different types of language students use to accomplish the tasks. Finally, "strategic competence, or the ability to use communicative strategies, is acquired through the need for understanding during the interaction required to accomplish the tasks".

According to Rod Ellis (1995), a task has four main characteristics:

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1. A task involves a primary focus on (pragmatic) meaning.
2. A task has some kinds of 'gap' (Prabhu (1982) identified the three main types as information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap).
3. The participants choose the linguistic resources needed to complete the task.
4. A task has a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome.

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TBL is concerned with students and not teacher activity and it lies on the teacher to produce and supply different tasks which will give the students the opportunity to experiment spontaneously, individually and originally with the foreign language. Each task will provide the students with new personal experience with the foreign language and at this point the teacher has a very important part to play. He or she must take the responsibility of the consciousness raising process, which must follow the experimenting task activities. The consciousness raising part of the TBL method is a crucial for the success of TBL, it is here that the teacher must help students to recognise differences and similarities, help them to "correct, clarify and deepen" their perceptions of the foreign language.

E. The Procedures of Task Based Learning

In designing the lesson, the teachers should focus on the language function, what the students do based on the activities given by the teachers. The students have to do the task as the core of the lesson. They are not forced to focus on grammar, so their teachers should bear in mind that any attention to form, that is grammar or vocabulary, it will make them distracted from the task itself and become preoccupied with detecting and correcting errors and try to look up language in dictionaries and grammar references. Although there may be several effective frameworks for creating a task-based learning lesson, here is a basic outline:

a. Pre-task

In the pre-task, the teacher will present what will be expected of the students in the task phase. If the task is more difficult, the teacher should provide their students with key vocabulary or grammatical constructs, and the teachers should demonstrate as an example how to perform the task. By presenting a model of the task, it will be easy for the students to do the task by themselves and they should be responsible for selecting the appropriate language for any given context themselves.

b. Task

During the task phase, the students perform the task, typically in small groups, although this is dependent on the type of activity. Unless the teacher plays a particular role in the task, then the teacher's role is typically limited to one of an observer or counsellor—thus the reason for it being a more student - centered method. If the students have created tangible linguistic products, for example: text, montage, presentation, audio or video recording, learners can review each other's work and offer constructive feedback. If a task is set to

extend over longer periods of time, e.g. weeks, and includes iterative cycles of constructive activity followed by review, TBL can be seen as analogous to project-based learning.

F. Types of Task

According to N. S. Prabhu (1982), there are three main categories of task; information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap

1. **Information-gap activity**, which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another – or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example is completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. The activity often involves selection of relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer.

2. **Reasoning gap activity**, which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as in information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two.

3. **Opinion gap activity**, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions.

According to Jon Larsson, the objective of task based language learning is to display a significant advantage over traditional methods in how the communicative skills of the students are improved. The general ability of social interaction is also positively affected. These are, most will agree, two central factors in language learning. By building a language course around assignments that require students to act, interact and communicate it is hopefully possible to mimic some of the aspects of learning a language "on site", i.e. in a country where it is actually spoken. Seeing how learning a language in such an environment is generally much more effective than teaching the language exclusively as a foreign language, this is something that would hopefully be beneficial. While Larson goes on to say: another large advantage of task based language learning is that it encourages students to gain a deeper sense of understanding. Superficial learning is often a problem in language education, for example when students, instead of acquiring a sense of when and how to use which vocabulary, learn all the words they will need for the exam next week and then promptly forget them.

G. How to Design a Lesson Plan for Task-Based Learning

a. Planning

When planning a task-based unit, teachers can do it alone, work with other teachers, or involve the students in the process. Students can help determine the content by sharing their needs. For example, in an adult education situation, teachers can ask students what kinds of transactions they most want to learn to do in the target language. These transactions may be anything from learning how to make a doctor's appointment to filling out a job application. Ramirez (1995) recommends four major points to consider during the planning stage:

1. The purpose of the task (e.g., find the main idea in a story or practice a certain grammatical feature).
2. The content of the task (e.g., skills needed to make a phone call or go shopping).
3. How the task is accomplished (e.g., recall and/or transfer of previously learned information or skills).
4. Location where the task is performed (in class, outside class, or at home for homework)

b. Acting

Once the teaching unit is planned, the tasks can be approached in two ways. The first is to teach the students the correct vocabulary and language structures in order to carry out the

assigned task. Then, the next step is to have them perform the task (Ramirez, 1995). The second way is to give the students a task without the previous knowledge of the language they would need. The language is "discovered by students and provided by teachers" as the task is carried out. This second scenario could make some students uncomfortable. On the other hand, it could be successful for adult learners who are at an advanced level and possess a high degree of motivation and are at ease with taking risks in the target language. Teachers should consider whether or not this second method can be effective for their particular group of students. There are advantages and disadvantages to task-based instruction. The advantages are numerous. First of all, TBI is suitable for all ages and backgrounds, especially young learners. All children have learned their L1 in a contextualized setting, learning grammar and structure inductively. Their focus is on meaning, not form. A special consideration for these learners is that their language skills are still developing and teachers must be careful to create appropriate tasks for their level. Some other advantages of TBI are that it can be used to teach content as well as language, can be combined with more traditional teaching methods, can provide motivation due to tasks being relevant and immediate, and can be a useful method for students who don't do well in more traditional types of classroom learning or where teachers have little autonomy over their lesson planning. As for the disadvantages, a major one is that TBI requires a high level of creativity and initiative on the part of the teacher.

c.   Teaching Materials

There are some resources of teaching materials in the ESL field for TBI tasks, e.g., Experiential Language Teaching Techniques by Michael Jerald and Raymond C. Clark (1994), but the onus remains on the teachers to create meaningful lessons for their particular students' needs. In an EFL situation, there is a bigger challenge since comprehensible target language input is limited. However, the use of authentic materials and contact with native speakers can help. Other disadvantages are that students may prefer more traditional types of teaching. TBI relies heavily on student motivation and commitment. Students who are used to a teacher-
fronted classroom with little interaction on their part, might feel uncomfortable, and even unwilling to take some of the language risks involved in completing the tasks, especially if the tasks occur outside the classroom.

The example of task-based instruction

a. **Pre Activity**

Activity 1: Opening (5 minutes)

1. Teacher greets the students by saying " Assalamualaikum"
2. Teacher asks the students to sit in group of four.
3. Teacher explains to students that they will be preparing and mailing a package to their families in their home country at the post office. This experience will help them to know how to use the post office when they need to go again in the future.
4. Teacher explains that they will first go to the post office just to observe. Then in a couple of days, they will mail their package.
5. Teacher elicits some words related to the topic "Post Office", then he/she writes down on the board, for example : What do you need if you want to mail your letter?
6. Teacher assures students that the teacher will give them what they need so that they should be able to do it without much trouble.

Activity 2: Vocabulary (15 minutes)

1. Teacher distributes the students the vocabulary word list (see Appendix A, "Post Office Vocabulary").
2. Teacher asks students to compare the words from the list with the words written on the board. Are there any similarities or differences?
3. Teacher explains that these are the words they may hear when they observe at the post office.
4. Teacher shows students stamps, letters, envelopes, a package, bubble envelope, customs forms, and a money order.
5. Teacher asks students if they know the names of these items, share with the class. Then he/she explains any vocabulary they don't know, especially, a book/sheet of stamps.
6. Teacher explains the terms such as fourth class, first class (regular), air mail, express mail, priority mail, insurance, delivery confirmation, liquid, potentially hazardous, fragile and perishable.
7. The teacher may want to draw pictures next to words to help students remember meaning, or have them draw pictures.

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b. While Activity

Activity 3: Addressing a letter/package (5 minutes)

    1. Teacher gives out the hand-out "How to Address Mail" (See Appendix A).

    2. Teacher has students write their own address information on a separate sheet of paper so they can address their package at home that night.

Activity 4: Getting to know the transactions at the post office (20 minutes)

    1. Teacher asks students to look at the "Sample Conversations" hand-out (see Appendix B).

    2. As a class, write in any additions/changes needed in the conversation dialog based on what expressions were heard.

    3. Teacher asks students to read the conversations in pairs. Then he/she asks them to switch roles.

    4. Explain next in line, and the similarity between the expression "will there be anything else"? and "will that be all"?

    5. Teacher asks students if they have any questions.

    6. Teacher checks students' addresses for correct information while they are going over the dialogs

c. Post Activity

Activity 5: Watching video: observing at the post office (15 minutes)

    1. Teacher asks students to watch the video containing the dialogue between costumers and clerks at the post office.

    2. Teacher asks students in pairs or group of 4 to observe the language used by the mail clerks and customers.

    3. Teacher asks students to take notes of the conversations between customers and clerks.

    4. Ask them to compare their notes with their partners

    5. As a homework, students may be asked to write their own conversation between clerks and customers.

H. Conclusion

        Any explicit teaching of grammatical items can be limited or avoided because the students acquire second language structures through an unconscious process which is best

facilitated when their attention is focussed on meaning. The students are given an activity based on tasks which require them to use English to solve the problems of a task. It is hoped that they can develop their internal system of language by performing a task-based activity. This means that the students are encouraged to say what they need and want through performing activity.Task-based learning is advantageous to the students because it is more student-centered, allows for more meaningful communication, and often provides for practical extra-linguistic skill building. The tasks used in teaching learning process can promote language acquisition through the types of language and interaction they require. Although the teacher may present language in the pre-task, the students are ultimately free to use what grammar constructs and vocabulary they want. This allows them to use all the language they know and are learning, rather than just the 'target language' of the lesson. On the other hand, tasks can also be designed to make certain target forms 'task-essential,' thus making it communicatively necessary for students to practice using them. In terms of interaction, information gap tasks in particular have been shown to promote negotiation of meaning and output modification.

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APPENDIX A

POST OFFICE VOCABULARY

Stamps	First Class
Mail	4thClass
Postage	Insurance
Envelope	Delivery Confirmation
Bubble envelope	Perishable
Address	Liquid
Customs form	Potentially haz
Ardous	Package
Air Mail	Money Order
Express Mail	Fragile
Priority Mail	

HOW TO ADDRESS MAIL
FROM:
Name:John Smith
Street, Apt. #:935 Hotel St.
City, State, Zip Code: Honolulu, HI 96819
Country: USA

TO:
Name: Hiroko Nakamura
Street, Apt. #: 10-6-2 Sagamigaoka
City: ZamaPrefecture, Zip Code: Kanagawa 228-0001
Country: JAPAN

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS
Mail Clerk: May I help you?
Customer: Yes. I want to buy some stamps.
Mail Clerk: That will be $8.40.
Customer: (Gives Mail Clerk money.) Okay.
Mail Clerk: Will there be anything else?
Customer: No, thank you.
Mail Clerk: Next in line, please.
Customer: I'd like to mail this package.
Mail Clerk: Is there anything liquid, perishable, fragile, or potentially hazardous? (used when mailing packages only)
Customer: No.
Mail Clerk: How would you like this sent?
Customer: Air Mail please.
Clerk: Would you like insurance?
Customer: Yes, please.
Mail Clerk: What is the value?
Customer: $50.00.
Mail Clerk: Will that be all?
Customer: Yes, thank you.
Mail Clerk: That will be $12.95.
Customer: (Gives money to Mail Clerk) Thank you.
Mail Clerk: You're welcome
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