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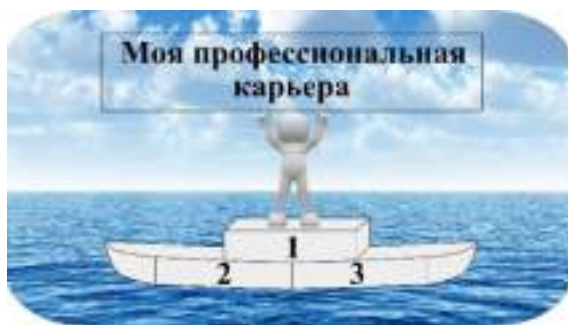
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**Международный научно-образовательный электронный журнал
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Название публикации: «TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS»

Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) represented a shift from traditional form-focused instruction to a communicative, learner-centered approach that emphasized the use of authentic language in real-world tasks. This study explored how TBLT could contribute to the development of critical thinking skills among language learners by integrating problem-solving, analysis, and decision-making into language activities. Through literature review and qualitative observation, the research identified that task design, learner interaction, and reflection were key elements influencing the enhancement of critical thinking. The study suggested that TBLT not only improved communicative competence but also promoted intellectual engagement and reasoning abilities. The findings contributed to the understanding of how pedagogical practices could bridge linguistic and cognitive growth, making TBLT a powerful framework for twenty-first-century language education. The paper concluded that the incorporation of higher-order thinking tasks within TBLT frameworks was essential for fostering autonomous and reflective learners.

Methods and Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive and interpretive approach. The research focused on the analysis of existing literature, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with English language teachers who had implemented TBLT in their classrooms. The qualitative method allowed for a deeper exploration of how learners developed critical thinking through interactive and communicative tasks rather than rote memorization or repetitive drills.

Data were collected through document analysis of lesson plans and task materials used in language classrooms. The observations focused on teacher-student interactions,

the structure of communicative tasks, and learner responses during and after task performance. Semi-structured interviews provided insights into teachers' perspectives on task design and student cognitive engagement. The data were coded thematically, with particular attention to indicators of critical thinking such as inference, evaluation, explanation, and reflection.

Reliability was ensured through triangulation, where multiple data sources were compared and validated. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants and maintaining confidentiality. The interpretive nature of the methodology allowed for the identification of patterns and pedagogical implications rather than numerical generalizations.

Introduction

In the modern educational landscape, the development of critical thinking skills had become a central goal, particularly within the field of language learning. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged as a pedagogical approach that moved beyond the mechanical repetition of forms and focused instead on meaningful communication. Unlike traditional grammar-translation or audio-lingual methods, TBLT emphasized the completion of authentic, goal-oriented tasks that mirrored real-life situations. The central premise of TBLT was that language learning occurred most effectively when learners were engaged in the use of language for genuine communicative purposes.

The role of TBLT in developing critical thinking extended beyond linguistic competence. It encouraged learners to analyze problems, make decisions, evaluate alternatives, and reflect on their learning processes. These cognitive operations paralleled the components of critical thinking, such as reasoning, inference, and metacognition. Thus, integrating TBLT into language education not only facilitated communicative proficiency but also cultivated intellectual independence and reflective awareness.

Historical Background of TBLT

Task-Based Language Teaching originated in the late twentieth century as part of the communicative language teaching movement. Early influences came from the

works of Prabhu (1987), who conducted the Bangalore Project in India, demonstrating that learners acquired language more effectively when engaged in meaning-focused tasks. Later, theorists such as Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996) elaborated on TBLT frameworks that categorized tasks into pre-task, task cycle, and post-task stages.

The evolution of TBLT reflected a growing dissatisfaction with form-focused instruction, which often failed to develop learners' communicative competence. By contrast, TBLT positioned language as a tool for problem-solving and negotiation of meaning. This shift mirrored broader educational trends toward experiential and constructivist learning, where learners actively constructed knowledge through participation and reflection.

Over time, TBLT gained recognition not only as a language teaching methodology but also as a means of fostering learner autonomy and higher-order thinking. Researchers argued that when learners were asked to plan, execute, and evaluate tasks, they developed not only linguistic accuracy but also the cognitive flexibility necessary for critical thought.

Cognitive Foundations of Critical Thinking in Language Learning

Critical thinking was often defined as the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information for the purpose of forming reasoned judgments. In the context of language education, it required learners to go beyond comprehension and memorization, engaging instead in interpretation, argumentation, and self-reflection. TBLT provided a natural context for these skills to emerge.

During task completion, learners needed to make choices, justify opinions, and negotiate meaning—all processes that activated higher-order cognitive functions. For instance, when completing a problem-solving task such as planning a community project or debating an environmental issue, learners practiced not only linguistic structures but also the mental habits of inquiry and reasoning. Furthermore, post-task reflection sessions encouraged metacognitive awareness, allowing learners to evaluate their communication strategies and reasoning processes.

The interrelation between language and thought suggested that as learners articulated ideas in a second language, they refined their capacity for logical reasoning.

In this sense, language learning through TBLT became a vehicle for intellectual development as well as linguistic proficiency.

Designing Tasks for Critical Thinking Development

The design of tasks played a decisive role in determining the extent to which TBLT could foster critical thinking. Tasks that merely required factual recall or mechanical manipulation of language forms were insufficient. Instead, tasks needed to include elements of inquiry, problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making.

Teachers designed tasks that required learners to analyze data, discuss ethical dilemmas, or propose innovative solutions to real-world issues. For example, in one observed classroom, learners engaged in a simulated town hall meeting where they debated urban development plans. Such tasks required learners to evaluate evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and articulate reasoned arguments—all core aspects of critical thinking.

Furthermore, sequencing of tasks from simple to complex allowed for scaffolding cognitive demands. Initial tasks might involve comprehension or information exchange, while later tasks emphasized synthesis and evaluation. This progression mirrored Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive skills, aligning language pedagogy with psychological theories of intellectual development.

Teacher's Role in Facilitating Thinking through Tasks

The teacher's role in TBLT extended far beyond mere transmission of knowledge. Teachers acted as facilitators, guiding learners through the stages of exploration, interaction, and reflection. They provided linguistic support while also encouraging students to engage in reasoning and inquiry.

During the pre-task phase, teachers activated prior knowledge and introduced thematic vocabulary relevant to the communicative situation. During task performance, they observed interactions and intervened strategically to prompt deeper thinking. For example, teachers asked open-ended questions such as "What evidence supports your opinion?" or "How could you solve this differently?" These prompts pushed learners to move beyond surface-level communication and engage in analytical reasoning.

In post-task discussions, teachers guided reflective analysis, asking students to evaluate their strategies and justify their conclusions. This reflection reinforced metacognitive skills, helping students to recognize the reasoning processes underlying their linguistic performance. Thus, the teacher's role was instrumental in transforming communicative activity into a platform for intellectual growth.

Collaborative Learning and Peer Interaction

Collaboration was an essential feature of TBLT and a key driver of critical thinking development. Through pair and group work, learners were exposed to multiple viewpoints and were required to negotiate meaning and resolve differences. Such social interaction mirrored the processes of reasoning in real-life contexts, where critical thinking often occurred in dialogue rather than isolation.

In task-based settings, learners engaged in joint problem-solving, peer correction, and collective decision-making. These collaborative dynamics required participants to justify their opinions, critique others' suggestions, and reach consensus. The process of defending ideas and accommodating alternative perspectives strengthened both communicative competence and cognitive flexibility.

Additionally, peer interaction encouraged self-regulation and responsibility. Learners who assumed leadership roles within groups practiced argument construction and evidence-based persuasion, while others developed evaluative listening and empathy. Therefore, collaborative learning within TBLT classrooms created a microcosm of democratic dialogue, where critical thinking and communication intertwined.

Assessment and Reflection in TBLT Contexts

Assessment in TBLT contexts emphasized performance and reflection rather than isolated language accuracy. Teachers used authentic assessment techniques such as portfolios, self-assessment checklists, and peer feedback forms to evaluate both linguistic and cognitive outcomes.

Reflection was central to this process. Learners were encouraged to think about how they approached a task, what strategies they used, and how they might improve in

the future. These reflective practices cultivated metacognitive awareness, enabling learners to monitor their thought processes and identify patterns of reasoning.

Furthermore, self- and peer-assessment aligned with constructivist principles, positioning learners as active participants in the evaluation of their learning. By analyzing their task performance, students not only deepened their understanding of language use but also internalized the habits of critical thinkers—questioning assumptions, recognizing biases, and drawing reasoned conclusions.

Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

Despite its theoretical and practical strengths, the implementation of TBLT faced several challenges. Teachers often struggled with designing tasks that balanced communicative goals with cognitive rigor. Institutional constraints such as limited class time, standardized curricula, and assessment pressures hindered the integration of open-ended, problem-solving tasks.

Moreover, learners accustomed to teacher-centered instruction sometimes resisted the autonomy and uncertainty inherent in TBLT. They perceived tasks that lacked clear right or wrong answers as ambiguous or stressful. Overcoming these challenges required professional development for teachers and gradual familiarization for students.

The pedagogical implications were significant. Teacher education programs needed to include training on task design, scaffolding strategies, and reflective assessment. Curricula should integrate critical thinking objectives explicitly within task-based frameworks. Furthermore, policy-makers and educators needed to recognize that language education was not merely about grammatical competence but also about developing thoughtful, analytical citizens.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that Task-Based Language Teaching offered an effective pedagogical approach for integrating critical thinking development into language learning. By engaging learners in meaningful, cognitively demanding tasks, TBLT facilitated the simultaneous growth of communicative and intellectual skills. Teachers

played a pivotal role as facilitators of reasoning and reflection, while learners benefited from collaboration and authentic engagement.

Although challenges persisted in implementation, the potential of TBLT for fostering critical thinking was undeniable. The integration of inquiry-based tasks, reflective assessment, and collaborative dialogue transformed language classrooms into spaces of active reasoning and intellectual exploration. Ultimately, TBLT contributed not only to linguistic proficiency but also to the cultivation of independent, reflective, and critical thinkers capable of navigating the complexities of modern communication and global citizenship.

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