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## Task-based Teaching: What, Why, and How

### **Introduction**

**I**n recent years the roles of conversations and interactions in language learning in the classroom have received increasing attentions. Along this line, the roles of the teacher and learners have also changed because of the demands made upon them in the teaching-learning processes. The need to engaged learners during learning is seen as a necessary condition in order to enable them to use the language. One of the teaching model that sees interaction as the central focus of teaching plan is a task-based instruction. It is commonly believed that any teaching decision that is made should be based on a coherent theory of learning and teaching. A lot of research has produced new insights and understanding on how learners learn a new language but very little has been understood, let alone reflected in teaching practices. The purpose of this paper is to present some theoretical rationale of a task-based instruction as well as its application in teaching.

### **Underlying theories of task-based instruction**

A task-based instruction is based on the view of language as a social means to carry out communication purposes which presupposes the interlocutors to have adequate knowledge of the language and its use. The early theory of communicative competence is proposed by Hymes (1972) who says that in order to use a language communicatively one should have the linguistic ability, that is knowledge of the language (grammar) and the ability to perform the language, that is the use of the language associated with the process of encoding and decoding the language. Language use is not only judged by grammaticality

but also by other aspects such as appropriateness. A person's ability to use a language is evaluated on four criteria: (1) whether something is formally possible, this relates to grammaticality, (2) whether something is feasible, this relates to psychological acceptability, (3) whether something is appropriate, this relates to socio-cultural acceptability, and (4) whether something is in fact done, this relates to whether or not the speech act is in fact performed.

This notion of communicative competence is later developed by Canale and Swain (1980) who summarize communicative competence as consisting of:

1. Sociolinguistic competence; the ability to express messages in terms of the person being addressed and the contexts in which the conversation or the communication takes place.
2. Discourse competence; the ability to select, to arrange and to sequence words and structures clearly and effectively as a means of expressing intentions or messages.
3. Linguistic competence; the ability to use correct rules of the language grammatically.
4. Strategic competence; the ability to use effective and appropriate strategies to compensate for the weaknesses when using the language in the three areas above.

In this view, the notion of communicative competence is more integrative in that it synthesizes knowledge of grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social contexts to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse. In other words, the success of communication depends on several things and one of them is grammar.

Another aspect of the theory of communicative competence is drawn from the work of van Ek's Threshold Level (1976) which Canale and Swain (1980) call basic communication skills. Van Ek's work describes the minimum

level of communication skills needed by learners for survival purposes in a second or foreign language setting. Van Ek's model provides a list of basic language functions and notions that are important for the learner. Canale and Swain (1980) suggest that basic communication skills discussed in van Ek's "Threshold Level" can be considered as a minimum level of communication skills and in language learning these skills should be emphasized from the beginning in order to provide learners with the ability to get meaning across. However, they caution that second language learners may or may not be willing only to develop skills to get meaning across without studying aspects of grammar. Drawing conclusions from studies on second language learning, they state that "the focus on grammatical competence in the classroom is not a sufficient condition for the development of communicative competence. However, it would be inappropriate to conclude that the development of grammatical competence is irrelevant or unnecessary for the development of communicative competence" (p.13). This statement implies that it is reasonable to take a middle way; that is to combine both approaches in instruction where grammatical aspects of the language are incorporated into meaningful communicative practice.

Later development of the view of communicative competence is proposed by Bachman (1990) who says that communicative language ability comprises three elements: (1) Language competence; that is knowledge of language components (grammar), (2) Strategic competence; that is mental ability in implementing language components. Strategic competence links language competence to contexts of use and knowledge of the world which is termed 'knowledge structures', (3) Psychophysiological mechanism; that is the neurological and psychological processes involved in using the language. In sum, communicative language ability involves the ability to use grammar appropriately in

social contexts. Language use should also involve elements of discourse and psychological processes. These four elements should be taken into consideration in teaching.

A task-based instruction is also based on the theory of language teaching in general (Richards, 1998). Citing Zahorik's views (1986), Richards states that teaching should be based on scientific research, supported by experimentation and empirical investigation (p.34). In second or foreign language teaching, a task-based language instruction represents the application of research on learning tasks. Long and Crookes (1992) explain that the rationale of a task-based syllabus derives from principles of human learning in general and second language learning in particular. The units of analysis in a task-based language learning is not based on linguistic forms but on concepts of tasks (p.27). In addition, Long and Crookes (1992) also mention that task-based language teaching also derives from SLA research which indicates that formal instruction has some impact on the use of some learning strategies, and that formal instruction clearly improves the rate of learning (p.42). These points may indicate the importance of drawing learners' attention to those formal aspects that facilitate learning when the need arises. Research on tasks show that learners are involved in the negotiation of meanings in carrying out the tasks. During negotiation processes, learners receive the kind of inputs that are necessary to help facilitate learning and acquisition. It follows that if learning is facilitated through task fulfillment activities, tasks should form the basis of syllabus and teaching.

Another approach to the theory of teaching relates to the idea of learner training particularly the training of learning strategies. Research on learning strategies shows that successful language learners employ different learning strategies from those of less successful learners through different kinds of classroom learning tasks. It is assumed that

good language learners could be studied and strategies that they use during learning can be taught to less successful learners. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) suggest that,

students should be encouraged to experiment with a great variety of strategies and to apply them to tasks which promote creative, communicative learning and ...the language program should take into account learner's needs, including the need to gain self-control and autonomy through strategy use (p.297).

A useful inventory for language learning strategy in Oxford (1990) could be used as a research tool to find out useful learning strategies that can be utilized to facilitate learning. The strategy inventory covers learning aspects such as ways of effective remembering, using mental processes, compensating for missing knowledge, organizing and evaluating learning, managing emotions, and learning with others. Research on this aspect could provide valuable information for teaching application.

One aspect of learning strategy that relates to teaching principles is interaction strategies. Bejarano et.al (1997) identify two types of interaction strategies; modified interaction strategy and social interaction strategy. Modified interaction strategy consists of strategies that enable interlocutors to modify their speech in order to facilitate comprehension of messages such as checking for comprehension, appealing for assistance, giving assistance, and repairing. Social interaction strategies are those strategies that are necessary for maintaining the flow of conversation or interaction between the speaker and hearer such as elaboration, responding, seeking information or opinion, paraphrasing or facilitating the flow of conversations. In a task-based instruction, learners should develop these learning strategies, a necessary feature of interaction.

## **Definition of tasks**

Proponents of task-based instruction define tasks differently depending upon their perspectives. Although they are of the opinion that tasks are important in language learning, they have different views of what a task is. The first two definitions below have been taken from Nunan (1989).

1. Long defines a task as,  
a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form... In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between (Long,1986:89).

Long takes examples of the kind of work from everyday life's experience to define tasks, so his definition is non-linguistic because they refer to non-language related activities that take place outside classroom environments. Tasks that Long refers to have different characteristics from classroom tasks that are usually designed for language learning.

2. Richards and Weber takes a different perspective to define tasks. They say that a task is,  
an activity of action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative... since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond

the practice of language for its own sake (Richards and Weber, 1986:289).

This definition has a pedagogic perspective. A task is defined in terms of teaching in the classroom setting referring to the kinds of activities that learners do in the classroom. It is different from Long's definition in terms of the setting where a task is completed.

The common feature of both definitions is that they both involve the use of language for communication purposes with the focus on meanings not linguistic forms or structures. The definition of tasks that Nunan uses also focuses on meaning rather than form, as he puts it,

Communicative task is 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 (Nunan, 1989:10).

Or on page 11 he says,

...a task is a piece of meaning-focused work involving learners in comprehending, producing and/or interacting in the target language, and tasks are analyzed or categorized according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles.

Another notion of tasks is defined by Breen (1987:23) as seen below. He refers to tasks as

...any structural language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning from the simple and brief exercise type to more

complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving simulations and decision-making.

Breen's notion of tasks as having 'simple and brief exercise types' could be interpreted as the need for dealing with some aspects of grammar during the task fulfillment activity with some reservation that this form-focus work should not become the end in itself. Swales (1990) also comments on the idea of 'simple and brief exercise types' in Breen's definition as saying that,

If the 'simple and brief exercise type' is seen as an end in itself, as it might well be in a structural syllabus, then it does not reflect a task based approach. However, if it is so structured as to operate as directly facilitative of an encompassing 'real' task, as means to that end, then it will be task-based (Swales, 1990:74).

The definition of tasks as suggested by Candlin below refers to the structure of tasks that can be used as a teaching route because a task is seen to have beginnings, middle and ends. These task sequences will provide orientation to both the teacher and the learners in achieving learning objectives. He states that a task is,

One of a set of differentiated, sequenceable problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergence goals within a social milieu (in Swales, 1990:74).

Candlin's idea of tasks mentioned above is commented by Swales (1990). He disagrees on the aspect that a task should



always be worked on in a joint collaboration between the teacher and learners. He believes that it is not suitable or a necessary condition for language learning. There are tasks that learners can do outside classrooms. Another comment that Swales gives to Candlin's definition is the idea of a task having to contain a 'problem posing' element. He argues that 'problem-posing' should not be a criteria for tasks because there are tasks that do not have problems. Alternatively, Swales (1990) suggests that a task is,

One of a set of differentiated, sequenceable goal-directed activities drawing upon a range of cognitive and communicative procedures relatable to the acquisition of pre-genre and genre skills appropriate to a foreseen or emerging socio-rhetorical situation (Swales,1990:76).

In his definition, he sees the teaching of genre to be important and common characteristics of task activities such as negotiation and information gap are considered not criterial. He proposes that teaching and learning activities should be related to genre acquisition.

### **Theoretical justification of tasks**

The use of communicative tasks in language teaching is justified by three theoretical bases; the theory of language acquisition, theory of information processing, and theory of discourse. Based on the theory of acquisition, Skehan (1998) mentions that tasks can help activate acquisition process during task interaction when learners repair communication breakdown, negotiate meanings, or give feedback generated by task demands. Other task related interactions such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, and recasts are believed to contribute to acquisition.

Task demands also exert information processing. In completing a task, learners have to process information through three 'channels'; (1) meanings, reflected in fluency, (2) form-control, reflected in the accuracy, and (3) form-restructuring, reflected in the language use when learners try to modify their language to get meaning across.

Another theoretical dimension of tasks is its discursal potential in learning. Communicative learning tasks are meant to be completed at least by two persons. According to Yule (in Skehan, 1998), tasks involve both meaning negotiation and the speaker's ability to understand the listener's problems and difficulties encountered during task interactions. The concern here is not only on syntax or sentence level processing but also the interconnection, interpretation and comprehension of exchanges between the speaker and the listener.

From a pedagogical perspective, learning is enhanced when language is learned and taught through communication activities. Communication offers a lot of opportunities to internalize new words, to learn new structures and to receive input which then can become a useful intake for comprehension of meanings. This internalization of new words and structures can best take place when learners communicate and interact to each other through learning tasks. Interaction is done not only for the sake of producing the language but also for sharing ideas or achieving goals of communication. During interaction, learners also ask and give feedback, a necessary communication feature for comprehension of messages (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, 1993:10). Tasks that offer opportunities for comprehension, feedback and modified production are those which have the following features: (1) each learner has a different portion of information which must be exchanged in order to reach task outcome, (2) both learners are required to request and give this information to each other, (3) both learners have the

same goals, and (4) only one acceptable outcome is possible (p.17).

### **The place of grammar in a task-based instruction**

Although the current practice in teaching language puts more emphasis on language use, some attention to aspects of grammar has to be given in a task-based syllabus design. This concern is contained in Skehan (1998) who states that,

Researchers and practitioners in the areas of task-based instruction are united in one respect. Although the meaning-is-primary-criterion has precedence, there needs to be some concern for form if there is to be a prospect of interlanguage development and control. The differences are in how such a concern for form may be realized (p.269).

From a teaching perspective, the same concern for teaching form is also expressed by Allen (1986: 5) who says that students at the beginning level cannot be expected to use the target language communicatively unless they have mastered the necessary sentence structures and relevant vocabulary to express meanings. However, he cautions that attention to form should not become the end. It should be treated as a process in building a strong foundation for communication practice with genuine language use. In Rutherford's view (cited in Nunan, 1988:34-35), attention to form should be considered as a consciousness raising activity, not as an activity that requires memorization of rules. The argument given for this view is that of practical nature, that is, it is impossible to expose learners to all constructions of the language and the major work for a syllabus designer is to identify and select the most useful structure as demanded by learning tasks. From the perspective of communication,

Canale and Swain (1980) also see grammar as an important element because communication will not be possible without some knowledge of grammar (p.18). Savignon (1983) also acknowledges the importance of grammar knowledge in communication. He states,

...Success in communicative tasks depends largely on the individual's willingness to express himself in the foreign language, on his resourcefulness in making use of the lexical and syntactical items which he has at his command, and on his knowledge of the paralinguistic and kinesic features of the language - intonation, facial expression, gesture, and so on - which contribute to communication. Linguistic accuracy in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary is but one of the major constituents in this complex interaction (p.22).

Rejections to the teaching of grammar prior to the communicative teaching movement come from the fact that, in the past, grammar was taught as a separate, decontextualized element of language. Related to this view, it seems important to look at Widdowson's (1981) criticism to 'goal-oriented' approach to teaching language with reference to the formal syllabus. In his view,

if one allows the description of the language to be acquired to determine course content, whether this is done in terms of linguistic forms or communicative functions, then one assumes that what is to be learned must be explicitly taught. Yet we all know that learners have an irritating tendency towards independent action and will frequently follow their own patterns of learning behavior in spite of the teaching patterns imposed upon them (p.4).

This misfit between what is taught and what is learned is one indication of the failure of forms-based teaching and in Widdowson's view this pedagogic equation is 'wrong because the two sides of the equation are essentially different in kind' (p.5). In other words, it is a wrong assumption that the structural forms contained in a syllabus will be learned in a linear fashion following the sequence of presentation in teaching. Therefore, Widdowson (1981) suggests a process-oriented approach to teaching which is not based on selection of contents as stated in the syllabus but on the bases of 'presentation of language by reference to the means of learning and allows the ends to be achieved by the learner by exercising the ability he or she has acquired' (p.5). 'Means of learning', in my opinion, can take several forms and tasks can be one of them and if tasks form syllabus contents, then tasks become the means to teaching the language. In this view, instruction provides an ability training for the learners on which they can build a foundation for future use of the language. So, the role of grammar in this type of instruction (task-based instruction) becomes a means to achieve the learning goal.

The role of grammar in a task-based instruction is also conveyed in Breen (1987) who states that, 'the task-based syllabus also prioritizes communicative abilities and learning capability. A learner works within a task-based syllabus in order to learn how to be correct or accurate, to be socially appropriate, and to be meaningful or share meanings' (162). Proponents of task-based language teaching realize that language teaching should also give some attention to formal features within the framework of communication purposes in the classroom setting.

The relevant question of teaching grammar within a task-based instruction is 'how should grammar be taught?'. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) suggest three types of degrees of involvement of grammar in a task-based language

teaching; task naturalness, task utility, and task essentials. They write,

In task-naturalness, a grammatical construction may arise naturally during the performance of a particular task, but the task can often be performed perfectly well, even quite easily, without it. In the case of task utility, it is possible to complete a task without the structure, but with the structure the task becomes easier. The most extreme demand a task can place on a structure is essentialness; the task cannot be successfully performed unless the structure is used (p.132).

In teaching, they suggest that specific structures be targeted via task activities. On the other hand, the task design should also allow students' language structures to develop naturally without a planned, direct teaching (p.156).

A number of important research on tasks with respect to task features and task implementation is discussed in Skehan (1998) and the results of these studies have implications on teaching in three different aspects; task selection, grouping of learners, and task preparation and planning. Research on task features indicate that:

1. Tasks containing well structured information generate greater fluency and greater accuracy.
2. Tasks based on concrete and immediate information are easier than tasks based on abstract and remote information.
3. Symmetric tasks generate more interaction, more turns and greater negotiation of meaning.
4. Shared information tasks result in more coordinating and subordinating conjunctions than with split information tasks.

Research on task implementation has provided some ideas concerning how to group learners in order to maximize learning:

1. Familiarity with one another lead to more natural interactive exchanges during task interaction.
2. Higher proficiency students having a sender role tend to produce non-negotiated solution to communication problems.
3. Pre-task planning has effects on accuracy, greater complexity and fluency.

### **Task-based teaching as an alternative**

There are several reasons why tasks have become an alternative to more traditional approaches to learning. The following discussion is taken from Willis (1996).

1. Many students who have studied a foreign language leave school unable to communicate in it. Many students understand a number of phrases, but are unable to put them to use. Although many of them study a lot of grammar rules and pass their examinations successfully, they find they cannot take part in conversations. One reason why this happens is because they are exposed mostly to written language at the sentence level. They know how to read textbooks and do exercises. They hear and practice many dialogues which are carefully scripted but they are almost never exposed to real-spoken interactions other than instructions given by the teacher. This is not to say that classroom instruction is useless. Research has shown that there is evidence to suggest that instruction does help to a certain degree.
2. Learners often continue making the same errors even after being corrected many times. Very often students can master grammar points very well in a lesson when they do grammar exercises but they often cannot use it correctly when they express themselves freely even in a few simple

sentences. Put differently, this temporary mastery of grammar items seems to take place when they are paying conscious attention to form but fail to use it when they are trying to communicate and express meanings. What the teacher usually does to remedy this problem is to have a lot of practice activities, such as drilling a particular pattern. However, this hard work does not seem to help. In Krashen's view, students seem to have learned the grammar but have not acquired it. What is learned does not automatically lead to fluency.

### 3. Constrained conditions for language learning

In order for learning to take place, there are four learning conditions that should be met.

#### ***a. Exposure***

Language exposure in the class may take the form of reading, writing, listening or a combination of those three skills. Language learners should take full advantage of these types of exposure to the language. Learners should be able to make sense of what they hear, read, write or speak and they also have to observe how meanings and intentions are expressed by other learners. These activities can lead to noticing of language use.

#### ***b. Use of language***

It is now generally considered that input and output are essential for language development, especially if the goal of language learning is to be able to speak and or write in the target language. Learners need opportunities to use the language communicatively; what they want to say and express what they feel or think. Creating learning activities for real purposes of using the language gives learners chances to exercise their skills and use the language they know. This can



be realized through interaction in which the learners have the opportunities to manage and control their talk and receive the kinds of feedback at their level and hence, develop their discourse skills. Discourse skills that can be developed through conversation are:

- a. opening and closing a conversation,
- b. interacting and turn taking,
- c. planning what to say in advance in order to keep a longer speaking turn,
- d. reaching agreement cooperatively and changing the topic of conversation.

These discourse skills are difficult to acquire in activities which are not meaning-focused such as acting out dialogues (which are scripted) where the aim is to practice specific forms or functions. Practicing dialogues does not promote creativity, a necessary condition for learning.

### ***c. Motivation***

Motivation in language learning is complex and to sustain it to a level that can help and accelerate learning depends upon many factors. Whatever the motivation the learners have, instrumental or integrative, the essential requirement is they must have the motivation to learn. They must have a 'driving force' from within or outside themselves that make them want to process the exposure to the language, seek opportunities, and use it as much as possible. Motivation can be maintained if learners feel that they achieve success and language learning is worthwhile. Therefore, it is very important that teachers set manageable and achievable goals. Frustration may result from goals that are set beyond the learners' ability.

### ***d. Instruction***

There is some doubt as to whether instruction can help students learn. Complaints from teachers about learners

not learning what was taught are frequently heard. It is commonly believed that forms-focused instruction can speed up the rate of language development and help the level of learners' achievement to a certain extent. What instruction does not seem to help is to change the learners' developmental sequence. In other words, students will not necessarily learn what we teach them and learners go on making the same mistakes in spite of frequent feedback or error corrections they receive. This points to the need for adequate exposure and the right learning opportunities where learners can manipulate language skills that they have already and use their language that is close to language use in a natural setting.

#### **4. Classroom restriction on learning**

The whole aim of classroom learning is to reproduce as closely as possible the kind of language interaction that is found in a natural setting (as language use outside the classroom). However, the very nature of classroom interaction can restrict the learning opportunities that should be provided for the language learner. This is typically obvious in teaching exchanges in which the teacher initiates or ask a question, then the student responds, then, the teacher gives feedback. This is a typical three-part exchange that takes place in language classrooms, an interaction type that is not similar to that found in everyday, real life use of language outside the classroom. In the class, the teacher has the power to exert control over the class and the language produced by the students. The teacher initiates conversations, controls turn-taking, and evaluates the student's responses. This pattern of communication does not allow much opportunity for genuine interaction which is essential in language learning development. It is true that three-part exchanges give exposure of language to the students but this type of exposure restricts the student's language creativity because

the role of the students in this type of interaction is that of responding and initiatives are mostly controlled by the teacher. The chance to use the language in the classroom is even more constrained by the fact that the time allocated for learning the language is limited and the class size is usually big. In a task-based instruction, the role of the teacher and the students is entirely different. A large part of the language produced by the students does not depend on the teacher's initiation but on the student's composing processes of what they want to say, how and within the level of language they already know. Below are some advantages that learners can have in a task-based language learning:

1. It gives learners confidence. The learners try out whatever language they know in working in a pair or small group without fear of making mistakes or of being corrected in front of the class.
2. It gives learners experience of spontaneous interaction. The learners have the experience of expressing what they want to say in real time, constructing phrases and units of meaning while at the same time listening to what is being said by other members of the group.
3. It gives learners a chance to learn from other learners. They benefit from noticing how other learners express different kinds of meanings. Research shows that in group work learners provide corrective feedback to each other, ask for clarification, check understanding, or even rephrase what is said or explained.
4. Learner language use is purposeful and cooperative. They concentrate on building meaning during conversations, not just using language for display purposes. Interaction will consist of more than just one sentence or utterance because the task demands students to work on the goal of the task.
5. It gives learners more chances to try out communication strategies. During interactions, learners can check

understanding, paraphrase ideas, reformulate other people's ideas, and supply words and phrases for other speakers.

6. It helps learners gradually gain confidence. They find out that they can rely on co-operation with other students to achieve the goals of the tasks using the target language.

### **Phases of task-based teaching**

The framework of task-based teaching consists of three phases: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. The pre-task phase introduces the topic of the task to the class. The task cycle phase gives learners the chance to use what they already know of the language in order to carry out the task, and then to improve that language. At this phase the teacher gives feedback when it is needed. The last phase, language focus, allows a closer study of some of the specific language features that occur during the task cycle

At the pre-task phase the teacher introduces and defines the topic, for example, families, school work or any topic that is familiar to the students. Then students are guided to activate their knowledge of the topic by discussing words or phrases that will be useful during the completion of the task. The aim of this phase is not to list a large amount of words or phrases but to give students something that they can rely on when doing the task. This can be done by a teacher-led brainstorming activity.

At the task cycle phase the teacher's role is to make sure that all pairs or groups are doing the right task and are clear about the objectives of the task. Students should be encouraged to take part using the language that they know, not worrying about making mistakes. The teacher should not look for mistakes at this stage but instead, the teacher should help out if there is a communication breakdown between the students. It is also important to notice which students are controlling the interaction or using the mother tongue.

At the language focus phase, an activity that focuses on grammar needs to be created. This is important to avoid the risk of learners achieving fluency at the expense of accuracy. This activity can take the form of an oral and or written report where learners concentrate on their accuracy and fluency together. The teacher's role at this stage is that of a language adviser, helping students express meanings or what they want to say more accurately. Students should be encouraged to work collaboratively to write, edit and finally produce the report.

During the report stage, the main role of the teacher is that of a chairperson who introduces the presentations and sets a purpose for listening. The purpose for listening should be made clear to the students and that everyone should know what is expected at this stage.

### **An example of a task-based lesson outline**

Topic: A survey on favorite school subjects

Class background: a class of 20 students, first week of semester I, university level, mixed level students.

#### ***Pre-task activity***

1. Introduce the topic and purpose of the survey by asking students what subjects they studied at high school.
2. Make a list on the board. Ask them to group the subjects, for example, languages, science, etc.
3. Give instructions to the class. For example, *Tell the groups what were the school subjects you liked best and least. Explain your reasons.*
4. Organize groups of four with a chairperson. Give students a few minutes to prepare.

#### ***Task cycle activity***

1. The chairperson should allow each student to speak for not more than 2 minutes. During this phase, each

student should take notes of each person's presentation. The chairperson should speak last.

2. After each person has finished, ask them to form another group of four consisting of different members and repeat step 1.

### ***Language focus activity***

1. Each person prepares a written report on the survey which is then presented to the class orally. Students can help each other on language structures or ask the teacher.
2. With the whole class, discuss phrases expressing likes and dislikes of school subjects, or phrases denoting or implying levels of achievement in the school subjects.
3. Phrases giving reasons for speaker's attitudes to the subjects could also be very helpful.
4. For homework, students can be required to rewrite their report with some additional ideas discussed with the whole class.

### **Conclusion**

Task-based language teaching is based on the current view of language use and research on language learning. It provides learners with opportunities that are required to enable them to develop their language skills through learning tasks in group work where they can express and negotiate meanings by utilizing knowledge and skill in the language that they already have. Task-based teaching requires the teacher and students to assume a new role which is different from that commonly found in a more teacher-centered methodology. Although the primary concern in a task-based instruction is the development of communicative competence, the teaching of linguistic form is also important to the extent that it is essential to carry out the task demands.

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