

An Overview of Contemporary Approaches and Methods to Language Teaching:

- Task-based Approach**
- Competency-based Approach**

Task-based Language Teaching

TBLT, task-based instruction or task-based learning is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010) as:

a teaching approach based on the use of communicative and interactive tasks as the central units for the planning and delivery of instruction. Such tasks are said to provide an effective basis for language learning since they:

a involve meaningful communication and interaction

b involve negotiation

c enable the learners to acquire grammar as a result of engaging in authentic language use (p. 585).

Task-based Language Teaching

According to Brown (2001), task-based instruction situates the task in the center of the pedagogical activity; therefore, the learning process is viewed as a set a communicative tasks linked to pre-determined objectives.

Research on task-based learning is particularly interested in:

- identifying types of tasks that enhance learning (open-ended, structured, teacher-fronted, small group, and pair work),
 - defining task-specific learner factors (roles, proficiency levels, and styles), and
 - examining teachers' roles and other factors that contribute to the attainment of objectives
- (Brown, 2001, p. 50)

Task-based Language Teaching

Task

- Crookes (1986) defines a task in an educational setting to be:

a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course or at work. (cited in Long & Crookes 1993: 39)

- From a classroom-based position, Wright (1987) defines tasks as:

...instructional questions which ask, demand or even invite learners (or teachers) to perform operations on input data. The data itself may be provided by teaching material or teachers or learners. I shall term this limited set of tasks “instructional tasks. (Wright 1987: 48)

- Prabhu (1987), for his part, provides the following definition:

An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a 'task'. (Prabhu, 1987, p.21)

Task-based Language Teaching

Task

- For Breen (1987), a task has a clear instructional role and defines it as follows:

a broad sense to refer to any structural language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified work procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to range of workplans 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 or simulations and decision-making. (Breen 1987: 23)

- Nunan (1989) defines a communicative task situated within the language classroom to be:

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)

Task-based Language Teaching

Task

- Skehan's (1998) defines a task as an activity in which:
 - meaning is primary,
 - there is some communication problems to solve,
 - there is some sort of a relationship to comparable real-world activities,
 - task completion has some priority, and
 - the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.
- Brown (2001) argues that a task is a technique with a special form. Sometimes, task and technique are the same thing (a problem-solving task/technique; a role-play task/technique, etc.) However, in other case, a task may include a number of techniques, i.e., tasks are usually bigger in their outcomes than techniques.

Task-based Language Teaching

Three types of Task-based syllabuses

- Long and Crookes (1993) propose three types of task-based syllabuses: procedural, process and task-based language teaching:

Task-based syllabus	Procedural	Process TBLT syllabus	TBLT
Type of task	Language-learning centred. Information gap, opinion gap, and reasoning gap activities.	Learner-centred, social and problem-solving orientation.	Language-learning centred. Target tasks
Main features	Priority is given to task completion meaning-based; teacher speech resembles “caretaker talk”; no systematic correction of learner errors; has been subjected to rigorous testing.	Takes its roots in general educational theory and philosophy; centred on the learner and learning as opposed to language learner and learning; learning is a negotiated process.	Based on SLA and L2 classroom research; makes use of course design for LSP; relatively structured; provides provision for focus on form.
Potential problem areas	No prior needs analysis, hence no criteria/rationale for task selection; arbitrary grading and sequencing selection; arbitrary grading and sequencing of tasks; lack of regard for a focus on form as suggested by SLA research.	No prior needs analysis, hence no criteria/rationale for task selection; the problem of grading and sequencing of tasks is controversial; no explicit provision is made for a focus on form; no SLA rationale; has not been subjected to rigorous testing	Limited research base; the problem of grading and sequencing of tasks is controversial; lesser learner autonomy; has not been subjected to rigorous testing.

Task-based Language Teaching

Strengths/benefits of a task-based teaching

- TBLT provides the opportunity for natural learning within the classroom context.
- It stresses meaning over form; however, it can also emphasize learning form.
- It offers learners a fertile input of target language.
- It is intrinsically motivating.
- It is consistent with a learner – focused educational philosophy but also gives permission for teacher input and guidance.
- It contributes to the improvement of communicative fluency while not disregarding accuracy.
- It can be deployed together with a more traditional approach.

(Ellis, 2009; as cited in Daminjanov & Nigora, 2019, p. 632)

Task-based Language Teaching

Challenges of a task-based teaching

- The drawbacks of task-based learning rely not so much on the potential powerfulness of this type of instructional content but on problems of conducting the instruction.
- Task-based learning involves a high level of creativity and dynamism on the part of the teacher. If teachers are restricted to more traditional roles or do not possess time and resources to provide task-based teaching; this type of teaching may be impracticable.
- Task –based learning necessitates resources beyond the textbooks and related materials generally available in foreign language classroom.
- Students may, at first, refuse or object to task-based language learning in that this type of instruction is not what many students expect and want from a language class.

(Hatip, 2005; as cited in Daminjanov & Nigora, 2019, p. 632)

Competency-based Approach

Competency based approach/education/instruction “is an approach to teaching that focuses on teaching the skills and behaviours needed to perform competencies. Competencies refer to the student’s ability to apply different kinds of basic skills in situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 104).

Chelli (2010) holds that “the competency-based approach is a very popular approach which focuses on measurable and useable knowledge, skills and abilities. It consists of teachers basing their instructions on concepts expecting to foster deeper and broader understanding” (p. 11).

For Richards and Rodgers (2001), competency-based education focuses on learning outcomes, i.e., it is more significant to address what learners are supposed to do rather than what they are supposed to learn. Therefore, CBA is a functional approach promoting life skills.

Competency-based Approach

Main Characteristics of CBA

A focus on successful functioning in society	Enabling learners to function properly in society and to fulfill the demands of the world.
A focus on life skills	Only the needed language forms/skills are taught.
Task- or performance-centered orientation	Focus on what learners will be able to do with language not what they will be able to know about it.
Modularized instruction	Language learning is broken down into small chunks and objectives into sub-objectives
Outcomes that are made explicit beforehand	Learning behavioural objectives/outcomes are known before the teaching learning process starts.
Continuous and ongoing assessment	Learners are pre-tested to determine what skills they lack and post-tested after being instructed in that skill.
Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives	Assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviours
Individualized, student-centered instruction	Objectives are defined in terms of individual needs and learning is not time-based as learners have the freedom to move at their own pace.

Competency-based Approach

Teachers' and Students' Roles within a CBA Framework

Instead of being a knowledge provider as in traditional approaches, the teacher, in a CBA framework, becomes more of a facilitator whose main duty is to get learners immersed in the process of language acquisition (Sturgis & Patrick, 2010).

The teacher's main role lies in their efficiency in constructing tasks and activities that meet the needs and expectations of the learners and in constantly providing feedback assessing learners' progress (Mansour, n.d.).

Students are expected to take charge of their own learning and be active participants as opposed to being recipients and consumers of knowledge. Learners' autonomy is one of the main principles of CBA where they are expected to generate knowledge and share with peers (Mansour n.d.).

Competency-based Approach

Ellerbusch et. al., 2005 (cited in Rambe, 2013, p. 51)

	Traditional Approach	Competency Based Approach
Pre-Instructional Period	<p>Experience and knowledge is external to learner</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Curriculum designer distills and arranges this experience and knowledge</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>Learners acquire experience and knowledge in their lives</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Curriculum designer provides an experience that will tap learners' values and ideas</p> <p>↓</p>
Instructional Period	<p>Instructor presents experience and knowledge to learner</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Learners hear and see presentation</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>Learners experience new situations; match new experience with previous learning</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Learners distill new values and new knowledge</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Learners try out new behaviors and acquire new experiences and knowledge in both simulated and 'real world' environments</p> <p>↓</p>
Post-Instructional Period	<p>Learners try out new behaviors in 'real world' the experience comes after instruction</p>	<p>Learners continue to process experience and knowledge as basis of original knowledge and experience</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Learners apply new behaviors in 'real world' environment</p>

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