TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES IN EFL CLASSROOMS.

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Abstract: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has garnered widespread attention in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction because of its learner-centered orientation and communicative authenticity. This article explores both the advantages and the challenges of implementing TBLT in EFL classrooms, drawing on empirical studies and theoretical discussions. It examines how TBLT fosters communicative competence, learner motivation, and contextualized language use, while also considering constraints such as teacher preparedness, assessment alignment, classroom management, and cultural expectations. Implications for practice and future research directions are presented.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, TBLT, EFL, communicative competence, learner motivation, assessment, teacher training

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), rooted in communicative language teaching, centers instruction around meaningful tasks rather than explicit presentation of language forms. A "task" in this approach is an activity where learners use language purposefully to achieve an outcome, such as solving a problem, completing a project, or exchanging information [1]. In EFL contexts, where exposure to authentic language is limited, TBLT promises to create more naturalistic opportunities for communication. Numerous studies underscore its potential to enhance motivation, fluency, and autonomy [2], [3]. However, implementing TBLT effectively also presents challenges—ranging from teacher training to assessment mismatch—that must be navigated thoughtfully. This article reviews the principal advantages and challenges of TBLT in EFL classrooms, drawing on scholarly literature, and offers recommendations for effective implementation.

Analysis and Discussion
Advantages of TBLT in EFL Classrooms
Communicative Authenticity and Fluency

TBLT situates language learning in realistic, meaningful contexts. Tasks simulate real-world language use—e.g., planning a trip, writing a letter, solving a problem—encouraging learners to negotiate meaning rather than merely manipulate

forms [4]. This focus on task completion fosters fluency and communicative competence beyond the classroom [5] (pp. 45-47).

Enhanced Learner Motivation and Engagement

Tasks with clear, purposeful outcomes boost student motivation by linking classroom activities to genuine communication needs [6] (pp. 12-13). Learners report feeling more invested when they perceive tasks as relevant and applicable to their lives or future goals [7]. This intrinsic motivation can sustain long-term engagement with language learning [8].

Learner Autonomy and Strategy Development

In task-based environments, learners often plan, monitor, and evaluate their own performance. This promotes metacognitive awareness and fosters learner autonomy. Studies show that TBLT encourages students to develop strategies for problem-solving, peer collaboration, and self-correction [9] (pp. 98-100).

Integration of Skills in Holistic Use

Tasks typically require integrated skill use—reading, writing, listening, speaking, and even non-verbal resources—mimicking authentic communication. Such integration contrasts with segmented "skills-based" instruction and supports the development of holistic communicative competence [10].

Focus on Meaning and Form

Although TBLT emphasizes meaning, it allows for form-focused instruction in response to emergent learner needs. Form can be addressed in follow-up activities or through "focus on form" — brief, targeted attention to language features during or after a task [11] (pp. 23-24). This dual attention supports both fluency and accuracy.

Challenges of TBLT in EFL Contexts

Teacher Preparedness and Training

Implementing TBLT effectively requires teachers to design and manage tasks, monitor interaction, and provide timely feedback. Many teachers in EFL settings lack training both in TBLT principles and in practical task design. Inadequate professional development makes it difficult to shift from traditional, form-focused pedagogy [12] (pp. 153-155).

Assessment Alignment and Accountability

Standardized tests and institutional accountability mechanisms often emphasize discrete grammatical knowledge and translation skills. A task-based approach, focusing on communicative performance, may not align with such tests, putting teachers under pressure to "teach to the test" rather than task-based practices [13] (pp. 212-213).

Resource and Time Constraints

Well-designed tasks may require materials, preparation time, and classroom resources that are scarce in many EFL contexts. Large class sizes and limited contact hours further restrict the scope for extended, interactive tasks [14] (pp. 78-79).

Learner and Cultural Expectations

In many settings, students expect teacher-centered instruction and explicit grammar instruction. A shift to learner-centered, communicative tasks can conflict with cultural norms about teacher authority and effective instruction, leading to confusion or resistance [15] (pp. 33-35).

Classroom Management and Engagement Issues

TBLT often involves pair or group work, which can be challenging in overcrowded or poorly organized classrooms. Managing task flow, ensuring equitable participation, and maintaining focus can be demanding, especially where classroom discipline issues are prevalent [16].

Balancing Fluency with Accuracy

While TBLT enhances fluency, it can sometimes compromise grammatical accuracy if form is not adequately addressed. Teachers must strike a careful balance, embedding form-focused feedback without undermining fluency or disrupting task flow [17] (pp. 60-61).

Discussion

The advantages of TBLT—authentic communication, motivation, autonomy, holistic skill integration—are compelling, particularly in EFL environments where exposure to real-life English is limited. The learner-centered nature of TBLT aligns well with modern educational goals of critical thinking and communicative competence. However, the challenges are substantial: teachers need training; assessment systems must be reformed; cultural norms must be considered; and logistical constraints addressed.

Successful implementation requires systemic support. Teacher education programs must include TBLT theory and practice, including task design, scaffolding techniques, and feedback strategies. Institutions should adjust assessment frameworks to value communicative performance and formative assessment over solely discrete summative testing. Classroom realities—class size, material availability, and contact hours—must inform task selection. Moreover, gradual transitions that respect cultural and learner expectations are recommended: starting with semi-structured, scaffolded tasks and progressively moving to more open, authentic tasks as students and teachers adjust.

Conclusion

Task-Based Language Teaching offers robust advantages for EFL classrooms— including enhanced motivation, authenticity, fluency, autonomy, and integrated skills development. Yet, its realization is impeded by challenges related to teacher

preparation, assessment alignment, resource limitations, cultural expectations, and classroom management. Addressing these requires holistic, systemic efforts: reformed teacher training, supportive institutional policies, adaptive task implementation, and alignment with learner needs and contexts. Future research should investigate context-sensitive models of TBLT implementation in diverse EFL settings, longitudinal effects on learner outcomes, and effective ways to integrate task-based assessment practices.

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