# Review Studies on the Effectiveness of Task Based Language Teaching

[1]R. D. Gomathi, [2]V. Radhakrishnan

**Abstract--**An effective way of writing is mandatory in the current arena. The students need to acquire the skill in order to fetch a successful profession. In the work place, the students those who excel at writing skills are easily get attracted. The college students are in need to write well if it comes in writing notes, emails, reports and project proposal. Task-based method is a way of providing chances for learning in a natural way. It is proven that it reaches students in developing the writing skills. It would surely keep up the learners' interest and support them to obtain their goal. Various language teachers and researchers have a strong belief that engaging students through a series of task will present more chances to accomplish the writing competence to a greater extent.  This paper focuses on the review of writing skills, different methods and approaches of language teaching especially on TBLT.

**Key words--**writing skills, methods and approaches, task based language teaching, career skills

## I.  INTRODUCTION

English Language is a basic means of communication. It aids the people to communicate with others irrespective of their dialect or region. As Yadav (2007) says, "Language consists of words, idioms and syntax and it is through language that we learn to think, feel, judge and express. The rich heritage of great ideas and actions passes over to the young generation in terms of its language" (115)

Presently, the most powerful language that is used globally is English. People all over the world who make use of English as lingua franca attains greater heights than any other languages, such as, Chinese, French, or Latin. Jack C Richards and Theodore S Rodgers stated, "Latin was most widely studied as foreign language five hundred years ago. However, English has become the most widely studied foreign language today".

## II. VARIOUS METHODS TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

J.C.Richards explains the characteristics of grammar translation method which deals in gaining knowledge on language through the learning of grammar rules and applying the same in converting them into the target language. Situational method highlights on structure and how the specified structure is being involved in speaking. Frisby indicated that "word order, structural words, the few inflexions of English and content words, will form the material of our teaching" (Frisby 1957: 134).

Pittman clearly defined that "our principal class room activity in the teaching of English structure will be the oral practice of structures". Fries and his colleagues developed audio lingual method covering many notions taken from behavior and psychology. This method was widely adopted for teaching languages at college and

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of English, School of Science and Humanities, Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai-TamilNadu, India, rdgomathi@kongu.ac.in/gomathimaheswaran6@gmail.com
[2]Principal, K. S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Tiruchengode, TamilNadu, India, Radkrish25@rediffmail.com

university level in the United States and Canada" (Richards53). Thereafter, Richard and Theodore (2001) stated that the base of CLT is to be noted in the convention of language teaching in the late 1960s. A basic concept lying under all the communicative approaches as Widdowson (1978) notified, is that the learners need to learn not only to construct grammatically right propositional statements on experiential world, but also to improve the skill in using the language to get things completed. Richards and Theodor (2001) reinstated that the learners get a chance of learning a language only by using it to communicate, spontaneous and meaningful communication has to be the objective of classroom actions and fluency is a vital aspect in communication.

Brown (2007, p. 241) stated that "CLT is the best understood as an approach, not a method" and many other new methods have been derived from it. The three most important methodologies Content-Based, Task-Based, and Competency-Based Language Teaching are derived from CLT. Richards and Rodgers have asserted that: "TBLT is a logical development of CLT" (2001, p. 223). Tasks are the basic and core units of planning and instruction in TBLT (Ellis, 2000).

**Writing Skills: an overview**

Among the four language skills, writing is the most complex skill. "Many people find it easy to speak but hard to write things down on paper". Writing is a difficult task, Leo Masiello pointed," writing is hard work, or one student explains, 'for me, writing is like running or exercise'. The reason is that both of these activities take a lot of effort. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1989: 36) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously.

According to Kranke (1987: 79), students enter the classroom with their varied goals, belief, experience and previous knowledge. The teaching - learning activities should have to wrap up all these variances. Some researches, as reported by the Major English Language Arts Professional Organization (Yale, 2010), have determined that the students when they read widely, turn into better writers. At the same point, as Yale (2010) points out that practice in writing will help the students in building their reading skills.

**Review on Writing Skills**

The different interpretation of the writers and the researchers conferred below explain the difficulties involved in the process of writing. They suggest that the writing skills can be enhanced slowly if the learners are provided with suitable communicative framework and applicable tasks. Considering the long term requisite of the students in their both personal and professional growth, the writers and the scholars insist on the various aspects of effective writing.

Ghosh (1977) points out that the communication on paper becomes acknowledgeable and impersonal activity. The process of teaching writing is difficult as it involves many activities in terms of experience, analysis, ordering the items of definite significance, organizing into a meaningful series and at last expression of both competent and appropriate language. Shaughnessy (1977) states clearly in his exploration of students' difficulties in writing that the students attempt (basic writing) the way they see to, not for the reason that they are slow, indifferent to or unable to academic fineness. It is due to that they are neophytes, who learn by committing mistakes.

Badger & White (2000) concisely discuss the major three approaches in writing and list out the strong and weak points of these approaches. They state that all these three approaches are balancing and put forward that the process-genre approaches as a feasible model that includes all the approaches. The model interprets writing as a sequence of stages from a specific condition to a text along with the teachers assisting students' development by facilitating suitable input of knowledge and skills. Rao (2007) in his article endorses that clear instruction strategy on brainstorming has an influence on the performance of writing. He adds that the students have optimistic approach towards this strategy. Graham & Kelly (2010) stress the issues and the needs of the reluctant students on 'Meeting Individual Needs'.

**Review on Writing Skills of Engineering Students**

The profession of Engineering has now become more and more writing-focused. In all engineering colleges, the final year students have to write the project report. The students experience various problems while writing. Flowerdew (2000) recommends the genre oriented framework to teach the structure of organization in academic report writing. The author insists that sufficient exercises pointing on genre structure and the problem solving pattern are to be assigned to students, which encourage them for successful writing.

Rajaretnam (2001) outlines the fourteen week course 'Preparatory English Program', that intends to be a remedy for the students' in making use of English but also developing their level of proficiency. The author finally emphasized that the students liked the writing part and they showed interest in assignment writing.

Firkins et al (2007) put forth an activity based genre approach for teaching writing to low proficiency students in English. It is a mixture of two major approaches genre based and activity based approach. Indira and Minakshisundaram (2010) gave emphasis to the writing skills of engineering students. They resist on speaking which has occupied the dominant site in the university curriculum. Equally, the writing skill cannot be neglected in any of the ways. The technical writing is evolving as a field of profitable business. In addition to that, the employers and the outsourcing centers are now demanding engineers who can write acceptably good English.

The use of technology in teaching writing may not be merely disregarded as twenty first century is well-known for the advancement of technology in every field. Stapleton & Radia (2010) lay emphasis on new technological tools and online resources for effective use in writing pedagogy. Mahajan (2015) discussed on the need of workplace writing skills and remarks that the effective writing with accurate grammar, clarity, suitable sentence-construction andunity between the sentences are the important factors which are to be taken care of while writing reports, notices, letters, e-mails etc. He specifically mention about the prominence of writing noteworthy proposals in professional setup.

**Task-Based Language Learning**

According to Willis (1996), "A Task can be defined as an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome" (23).Task-based learning makes every learner to put themselves in realistic atmosphere. Willis (1996) emphasized that the task based language learners acquire the

language through self-intuition and tasks centered situation. In TBL, the learning gets fit to "the process that involves opportunities for learners to contribute in communication, where making meaning is primary" (Skehan38).

**Types of Tasks**

The several researchers have well-defined the tasks in different means. Some of them describe the tasks in terms of different processes they involve, whereas the others categorize the tasks in terms of various interactions that take place during the processes of tasks completion. The table indicates the tasks classifications designed by several experts in relation to the tasks processes.

It includes task designers and task types:

| S.No | Name of the Expert | Task Types |
|------|--------------------|------------|
| 1. | Willis (1996) | 1. listing<br>2. ordering<br>3. comparing<br>4. problem solving<br>5. sharing personal experiences<br>6. creative |
| 2. | Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) | 1. jigsaw<br>2. information-gap<br>3. problem-solving<br>4. decision-making<br>5. opinion exchange |
| 3. | Nunan (2001) | 1. real world<br>2. pedagogic |

## III.  METHODOLOGY OF TASK BASED LEARNING

As Willis (1996), Prabhu (1987) and Nunan (1985) rightly pointed out that the frame work of TBL covers three main stages for learning a language that can be defined as follows: pre-task phase, task-cycle (task phase) and post-task phases (language focus).

**The Pre-Task Stage**

In pre-task phase, the learners accomplish the tasks (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2006 and Skehan, 1996). Willis (1996) highlighted that an important activity in this phase is to introduce the target language to the students or providing the students with language confidence. Frost (2004) showed that in the pre-task phase, the teacher should certainly get to know about the class with the topic selected and also asking them to think on important words, phrases, etc., related to the topic.

**The Task-Stage**

Prabhu (1987) stated that in the task-phase, the participants carry out the activities for themselves. They complete the provided tasks either in pair or in team where their teacher monitors them (Ellis, 2003).

**Language Focus**

According to Willis (1996), the Post-task phase is the follow-up of task cycle. The participants have to be aware of language aspects such as consciousness-raising tasks, the exercise on patters and phrases (Willis, 1996). In addition to that, student participants work on the refinement of content and language as well. Lastly, the teacher provides the feedback on the accuracy-level of language.

**Review on Task Based Language Teaching**

Task-based Language Teaching is practicable to enrich the productive skills as it pays attention to both pragmatic and semantic sense of meaning. In recent years, various features of task based language teaching are studied with reference to the activities in the classroom.

Freeman (1977) has acknowledged learner-focused method for teaching writing skills through pair/group work to answer the problems in writing tasks. TBLT concept was successfully introduced by Prabhu in his communicational teaching project (1979 to 1984) in Bangalore, India. He (1987, p. 11) discussed that "structure-based courses required a good deal of remedial re-teaching which, in turn, led to similarly unsatisfactory results". Regardless of the statement that learners have got mastery over linguistic elements and vocabulary in Structural Oral Situational (SOS) approach, they flop to cultivate communicative competence. As a result, he endorsed meaning-centered TBLT approach against SOS approach.

Lopes (2004) conducted an experimental research on implementing Task-Based Instruction (TBI) to impart English in a well-known private school, British House, in southern Brazil, as a replacement for Audio-Lingual method and PPP approach. The findings of this study were amazing. The students through TBI approach improved their fluency level and achieved correctness in communicative competence. There was an unexpected triumph of TBI in speaking and writing proficiency. Moser (2005) explored a study to analyze the effect of TBLT on improving accuracy in oral and written communication. The finding was that there was a good impact on TBLT particularly in developing speaking and writing skills.

Djapoura (2005) attempted an experimental study to examine the effect of planning during the pretest on enhancing speaking and writing skills. In TBLT, the students were made to organize reports in a polished precise language and to speak in front of the class during the task stage. The finding of this research revealed that the planning time had an optimistic effect on TBLT framework in speaking and writing skills as the students had sufficient opportunity to repeat and to practice the grammar rules and vocabulary while making a report.

Indira (2011) in her research tries to reach cohesion and linguistic competency in writing through task based language teaching to the engineering students, predominantly for those with lower English proficiency. At last, she has found out that a balanced procedure of form oriented intervention and task based language teaching will

be effective. The incredible aspect is that the notion of reader perception has also been introduced into the process of writing through the tasks. The whole results propose that a task based and well-planned writing package can be more fruitful than the conventional methods of teaching.

## IV. FEEDBACK ON STUDENT WRITING

Students must require feedback from teachers and also from their peers on their written scripts for improving their writing skills. Williams (2003) endorses the effective feedback on learners' writing assignments. The typical method of teachers' feedback such as correcting the errors on surface level, unclear replies on the content always have an adverse effect on the writing of students. Rollinson (2005) discusses a short summary of ideas on "for and against" peer feedback and clarifies how well the procedures and the training can make a suitable situation for real peer feedback. McGarrel &Verbeem (2007) recommended a constructive approach to the teachers' feedback as an important strategy for motivating the writing level of students to make revision on their intermediate drafts. Both of them indicate the variances between the evaluative and the formative feedback.

Laycock (2010) says that the students need explicit guidance from their teachers depending upon their cautious observation regarding the process of writing and their final-product. Nurmukhamedov & Kim (2010) elaborated the efficiency of four sorts of comments that include asserting the problems of students, asking students to change or modify, exploring the items of doubt and unclear the doubt and suggesting or implying over the correction of the scripts. The findings of the study revealed that the suggestion and clearing doubts made effective revisions compared to the other two comments.

Crookes and Gass (1993) stated that for a long period of time, major researchers and linguists have been investigating the best suit approach which plays a prominent role in teaching and learning process of a language. He added that TBLT is also called as Task-Based Learning (TBL), Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) or Task-Based Approach (TBA). The Task-Based Learning (TBL) highlights in executing the tasks where in learners acquire communication and also social interactive skills. The core idea of this approach is to support the students in learning the target language by being exposed to purposeful task-oriented activities. The students can do their task to prepare a report on their understanding in both verbal and writing.

## V. CONCLUSION

Writing is not a flexible skill to be easily learnt in this age of modernization. The present day students are in need to understand the varied areas of knowledge and skills. Teaching the writing skills with the conventional methods does not suit the students of engineering. Afore mentioned discussion indicates that the contemporary philosophers and researchers have shown high feasibility in teaching grammar techniques using TBLT. Hence, the researcher has identified Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to overcome the writing barriers of engineering students.

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