

IMPROVING LEARNER INTERACTION THROUGH TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *Learner interaction is a central element of effective English language teaching because language develops through meaningful communication, cooperation, negotiation of meaning, and purposeful use. In many traditional EFL classrooms, learners often receive linguistic knowledge passively through explanation, translation, and controlled exercises, but they have limited opportunities to use English in real communicative situations. This situation may cause low confidence, weak speaking fluency, and dependence on the teacher. Task-Based Language Teaching offers an effective pedagogical solution by organizing lessons around meaningful tasks that require learners to exchange information, solve problems, make decisions, and produce communicative outcomes.*

Key words: *task-based learning, learner interaction, English language teaching, communicative competence, EFL classroom, task-based activities, pair work, group work.*

Introduction

English language teaching has changed significantly in recent decades. In the past, many classrooms focused mainly on grammar explanation, translation, memorization, and written exercises. Although these methods can help learners understand language rules, they do not always prepare students for real communication. Modern English language teaching requires learners to use English actively, confidently, and appropriately in different social, academic, and professional contexts.

Learner interaction is especially important in English as a Foreign Language classrooms because students often do not have enough opportunities to use English outside the classroom. If the classroom does not provide communicative practice, learners may know many grammar rules and vocabulary items but still struggle to speak fluently. Therefore, the English lesson should become a space where learners ask questions, express opinions, share ideas, solve problems, and cooperate with others through English.

Task-Based Language Teaching is one of the most effective approaches for developing learner interaction. In this approach, language is not taught only as a set of isolated forms, but as a tool for achieving communicative purposes. A task requires learners to use English in order to complete a meaningful goal. For example, learners may plan a trip, solve a problem, conduct a survey, compare opinions, prepare a presentation, or complete missing information. Nunan states that pedagogical tasks involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is mainly focused on meaning rather than form [1].

The relevance of this topic is connected with the need to make English lessons more learner-centered, communicative, and practical. In many EFL contexts, including school and university classrooms, students need more chances to speak and interact. Task-based activities can increase learner participation, reduce teacher domination, and create a natural need for communication. Therefore, improving learner interaction through task-based activities is an important issue in contemporary English language teaching.

Methods

This article is based on a qualitative and descriptive research approach. The study analyzes theoretical views on Task-Based Language Teaching and learner interaction in English language classrooms. The main method used in the article is literature-based analysis. Works by Nunan, Ellis, Long, Willis, and Richards and Rodgers are considered as the theoretical foundation of the discussion.

The article examines task-based activities from a pedagogical perspective. It analyzes how different types of classroom tasks can influence learner interaction, motivation, cooperation, speaking fluency, and communicative competence. Special attention is given to activities such as information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, role-play, discussion tasks, group projects, and collaborative writing.

The analysis also considers classroom practice. It focuses on how teachers can organize task-based lessons, prepare learners for communication, monitor group work, provide feedback, and manage possible difficulties. In this sense, the article combines theoretical interpretation with practical recommendations for English language teachers.

The methodological basis of the article includes the following principles:

First, language learning is viewed as a communicative process. Learners develop language more effectively when they use it for meaningful purposes.

Second, classroom interaction is considered an essential condition for developing fluency and confidence.

Third, tasks are analyzed as pedagogical tools that encourage learners to communicate, negotiate meaning, and cooperate with peers.

Fourth, the teacher is viewed not only as a source of knowledge but also as a facilitator, organizer, monitor, and supporter of communication.

Results and Discussion

The analysis shows that task-based activities can significantly improve learner interaction in English language teaching. The main reason is that tasks create a communicative need. In traditional exercises, learners may complete sentences or repeat language forms without real communication. In task-based activities, however, learners need to speak because they must achieve a goal together. This goal may be finding missing information, making a decision, solving a problem, or presenting a final result.

One of the most effective task types is the information-gap activity. In this activity, learners have different pieces of information and must communicate to complete the task. For example, one student may have a timetable with missing details, while another student has the missing information. They ask and answer questions to complete the timetable.

Such tasks naturally increase interaction because learners cannot finish the activity without communication. Ellis explains that a task should have a primary focus on meaning, involve real-world language use, and lead to a clear communicative outcome [2].

Problem-solving tasks are also useful for improving learner interaction. In these tasks, students work together to find a solution to a problem. For instance, learners may discuss how to reduce plastic waste at school, how to organize a class event, or how to help a new student adapt to the class. These activities require learners to give opinions, agree, disagree, explain reasons, and make decisions. As a result, students do not only practice language but also develop critical thinking and cooperation.

Role-play tasks are another important form of task-based interaction. Role-play allows learners to practice English in realistic situations such as shopping, visiting a doctor, attending a job interview, asking for directions, or making a complaint. These activities help learners connect classroom learning with real-life communication. Role-play also reduces fear because students speak through a role rather than only as themselves. This can make shy learners more active and confident.

Pair work and group work are central to task-based learning. When students work in pairs or groups, their speaking time increases. In teacher-centered classrooms, one teacher usually speaks to many students, and each student has limited opportunity to speak. In task-based classrooms, several pairs or groups can speak at the same time. This increases the amount of language practice and gives learners more chances to use English.

Interaction also helps learners notice gaps in their language knowledge. When learners communicate, they may realize that they do not know a word, phrase, grammar form, or pronunciation. They may ask for clarification, repeat information, reformulate their sentences, or request help from classmates. Long emphasizes that negotiation of meaning during interaction supports second language development because learners modify their language and pay attention to comprehensible input [3].

Task-based activities also improve learner motivation. Students are usually more interested in lessons when activities are meaningful and connected with real life. For example, discussing personal opinions, planning an event, solving a realistic problem, or creating a project can be more engaging than only completing grammar drills. When learners see that English helps them complete a task, they understand the practical value of the language.

Another important result of task-based activities is the development of learner autonomy. In traditional classrooms, students often depend on the teacher for every answer. In task-based classrooms, learners are encouraged to think, discuss, decide, and solve problems independently. The teacher supports the process, but the main responsibility for completing the task belongs to the learners. This makes students more active and responsible participants in the learning process.

The teacher's role is very important in task-based learning. The teacher should choose appropriate tasks according to learners' level, age, interests, and lesson objectives. If the task is too easy, students may lose interest. If it is too difficult, they may become confused

and use their native language too much. Therefore, tasks should be challenging but achievable.

The teacher should also prepare learners before the task. The pre-task stage may include introducing the topic, teaching key vocabulary, modeling useful phrases, and checking instructions. For example, before a discussion task, the teacher can teach expressions such as “I agree with you,” “In my opinion,” “Could you explain your idea?” and “What do you think about this?” This language support helps learners communicate more effectively.

During the task, the teacher should monitor learners carefully. Monitoring does not mean interrupting every mistake. If the teacher corrects too much during communication, learners may lose confidence and stop speaking. Instead, the teacher can listen, take notes, and provide help only when necessary. After the task, the teacher can give feedback on common mistakes, useful expressions, pronunciation, and task performance.

Willis suggests that a task-based lesson can be organized through three main stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus [4]. In the pre-task stage, learners prepare for the activity. In the task cycle, they complete the task through pair or group work. In the language focus stage, the teacher draws attention to useful language forms and corrects common errors. This structure helps balance fluency and accuracy.

However, task-based activities may also create some challenges. One common problem is the use of the mother tongue. Learners may switch to their native language when they do not know how to express an idea in English. To reduce this problem, teachers should provide useful language before the task and encourage students to use English as much as possible.

Another challenge is unequal participation. Some students may dominate the discussion, while others may stay silent. To solve this issue, teachers can assign roles such as group leader, secretary, reporter, timekeeper, or language monitor. These roles help every learner participate in the task.

Classroom noise can also be a difficulty. Task-based classrooms are usually more active and sometimes noisier than traditional classrooms. However, this noise can be productive if learners are using English for communication. Teachers should manage group work through clear instructions, time limits, classroom rules, and signals for attention.

Assessment is another important issue. In task-based learning, teachers should not assess only grammar accuracy. They should also consider fluency, participation, cooperation, task completion, vocabulary use, pronunciation, and communicative effectiveness. Richards and Rodgers argue that communicative language teaching requires learners to take part in meaningful communication rather than only study language forms separately [5]. Therefore, assessment should reflect real communicative performance.

Overall, the discussion shows that task-based activities make English lessons more interactive, practical, and learner-centered. They help learners use English as a means of communication, not only as a school subject. Through tasks, students develop confidence, fluency, cooperation, and communicative competence.

Conclusion

Task-based activities play an important role in improving learner interaction in English language teaching. They create meaningful situations in which learners need to use English to exchange information, solve problems, make decisions, and achieve communicative outcomes. Unlike traditional teacher-centered methods, task-based learning gives learners more opportunities to speak, cooperate, and participate actively.

The analysis shows that information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, role-play, discussions, surveys, projects, and collaborative writing can effectively increase learner interaction. These activities develop not only speaking skills but also confidence, motivation, autonomy, and social cooperation. Task-based learning also helps learners notice their language gaps and improve their communicative competence through interaction.

The success of task-based activities depends on careful planning, clear instructions, suitable task selection, effective monitoring, and constructive feedback. Teachers should prepare learners before tasks, support them during communication, and provide useful feedback after task completion. They should also manage challenges such as mother tongue use, unequal participation, and classroom noise.

In conclusion, task-based activities are highly valuable for modern English language teaching. They make the learning process more active, meaningful, and communicative. Therefore, English teachers should use task-based activities regularly to improve learner interaction and help students become confident users of English.

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