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DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Annotation: This article explores the development of communicative competence in technical college students through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). It focuses on how practical, goal-oriented tasks can improve students' ability to use English in real-life professional situations. The study highlights the importance of integrating workplace-related activities such as problem-solving tasks, role plays, and interview simulations into the language classroom. Based on theoretical sources and classroom practice, the article shows that TBLT increases student motivation, encourages active participation, and supports the gradual development of fluency and confidence. The findings suggest that task-based instruction is especially effective in technical education, where students need functional language skills for future careers.

Key Words: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), communicative competence, technical college students, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), classroom tasks, role play, problem-solving activities, language learning, vocational education.

Introduction

In the modern educational landscape, the importance of communicative competence has become increasingly evident, particularly for students in technical colleges. These learners are not only expected to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to apply English in real professional contexts such as workplace communication, technical reporting, and international collaboration. However, in many educational systems, language teaching still relies heavily on traditional methods that prioritize grammar rules, translation, and memorization of vocabulary. Such approaches often fail to prepare students for authentic communication. As a result, many technical students find themselves unable to express ideas fluently in English despite having studied the language for several years. This creates a clear gap between knowledge and practical use. In response to this issue, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained attention as an effective pedagogical approach. TBLT focuses on the use of language as a tool for communication, where students are engaged in meaningful tasks that reflect real-life situations. According to Willis, a task is an activity in which learners use language to achieve a specific outcome, with emphasis placed on meaning rather than grammatical form [1]. The main purpose of this article is to explore how Task-Based Language Teaching can be used to develop communicative competence in technical college students and how it can be effectively implemented in classroom practice.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of communicative competence was first introduced by Hymes, who argued that language knowledge should include not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts [2]. This idea marked a shift from structural approaches to communicative approaches in language teaching. Later, Canale and Swain expanded this concept into a more detailed model, including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence [3]. These components together form the basis of effective communication in real-life situations. In the context of language teaching, Richards and Rodgers emphasize that communicative language teaching views interaction as both the means and the goal of learning a language [4]. Within this

framework, Task-Based Language Teaching emerged as a more structured and practical approach to implementing communicative principles. Nunan defines tasks as classroom activities that require learners to focus primarily on meaning to achieve an outcome, rather than simply practicing language forms [5]. This definition highlights the shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered interaction. Ellis further explains that tasks should be designed to reflect real-world language use and should encourage spontaneous communication among learners [6]. According to him, tasks help learners develop fluency through meaningful interaction rather than controlled practice. Willis proposes a three-stage model for task-based learning, consisting of a pre-task phase, a task cycle, and a language focus stage [1]. This model allows learners to prepare for communication, perform the task, and reflect on language use afterwards. Technical college students, in particular, require language that is directly related to their future occupations. Finally, Long emphasizes that task-based instruction is particularly effective in second language acquisition because it promotes naturalistic language use and interaction [8].

Methodology

The study is based on qualitative classroom observation and practical application of Task-Based Language Teaching in technical college English lessons. The participants were students aged 16 to 19 with an English proficiency level ranging from A1 to B1. The teaching process followed Willis' task-based framework [1], which includes three main stages. In the pre-task stage, the teacher introduces the topic and provides essential vocabulary and expressions. In the task cycle, students work in pairs or groups to complete communicative tasks. In the final stage, students present their outcomes, and the teacher provides feedback on both content and language use. The tasks used in this study were carefully designed to reflect real professional situations that technical students may encounter in their future careers. These included workplace problem-solving activities, role plays simulating communication between technicians and supervisors, and job interview simulations. Data was collected through classroom observation, analysis of student speech production, and monitoring of interaction patterns during tasks.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in technical college English classes produced noticeable changes in students' communicative performance, classroom behavior, and learning motivation. These changes were observed during a series of lessons that included problem-solving activities, workplace role plays, and job interview simulations. One of the most significant results was the improvement in students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. At the beginning of the study, many students were passive and hesitant to speak English. Their responses were often limited to single words or very short phrases such as "Yes," "No," or "It is broken." This indicates that their communicative competence was initially low, and they lacked confidence in using English spontaneously. However, after repeated exposure to task-based activities, students gradually became more active participants in classroom interaction. They started to initiate conversations, ask questions, and respond more freely without waiting for direct teacher support. Another important result was the development of fluency in spoken English. During the early stages of instruction, students relied heavily on memorized expressions and struggled to construct sentences independently. Over time, however, their speech became more natural and functional. For example, in a technical problem-solving task, students initially said "Machine not work," but later progressed to more complete and meaningful expressions such as "The machine is not working properly, maybe there is a problem with the motor." This development shows that task-based activities help learners move from form-focused language use to meaning-focused communication, which is a key principle of

TBLT [1]. The role play and job interview tasks also demonstrated clear improvement in interactional competence. In the workplace communication simulation, students were required to act as technicians and supervisors. At first, communication was fragmented and hesitant, but as students became more familiar with the task format, they began to use more appropriate professional language such as "I have checked the system," "There is an error in the circuit" and "We need to replace the part." This suggests that repeated engagement in realistic situations helps students internalize functional language and use it more effectively in context. In addition to linguistic improvement, a strong increase in student motivation was observed. Learners showed greater interest and engagement when tasks were connected to real-life professional scenarios. Unlike traditional grammar-based exercises, task-based activities created a sense of purpose and relevance. Students were not simply completing exercises for grades; they were solving problems, communicating as professionals, and preparing for future careers. This finding is consistent with Ellis, who emphasizes that meaningful tasks increase learner engagement and promote active language use [6]. Collaboration among students also improved significantly. Group work encouraged learners to share ideas, negotiate meaning, and support each other during communication breakdowns. This interaction helped weaker students participate more confidently, while stronger students naturally took leadership roles in discussions. As a result, the classroom became more dynamic and learner-centered, rather than teacher-dominated. However, the implementation of TBLT also revealed certain challenges. At the initial stage, some students experienced anxiety when asked to speak English without preparation. They were not used to spontaneous communication and often relied on their native language. In addition, classroom management required careful attention, especially when students worked in groups, as noise levels increased and some groups needed additional guidance. These challenges suggest that successful implementation of TBLT requires careful planning, scaffolding, and teacher support. Despite these difficulties, the overall results clearly indicate that TBLT is an effective approach for developing communicative competence in technical college students. The combination of meaningful tasks, real-world relevance, and active participation contributed to measurable improvements in fluency, confidence, and interactional ability. Furthermore, the findings support the view that language learning becomes more effective when students are engaged in purposeful communication rather than mechanical practice of grammar structures.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Task-Based Language Teaching is a powerful and effective approach for developing communicative competence in technical college students. By engaging learners in meaningful, real-world tasks, it helps bridge the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical communication skills. The findings show that TBLT improves fluency, increases student motivation, and encourages active participation in classroom interaction. It also helps students develop confidence in using English in professional contexts. Therefore, it can be concluded that Task-Based Language Teaching should be more widely implemented in technical education. Future research may explore its integration with digital learning tools and long-term effects on students' professional communication skills.

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