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The Importance of TBL (Task-Based Learning) Method to Develop Students' Russian Language Competence

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Abstract: Language teaching methodologies have evolved significantly over the past century, reflecting changes in educational theories, linguistic research, and sociocultural contexts. Early methods such as the grammar-translation method focused on rote memorization of vocabulary and rules, with an emphasis on reading and writing over speaking and listening. As language education developed, approaches like the Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method emerged, which prioritized oral proficiency through repetition and drill-based practices.

Keywords: Task-based learning (TBL), project-based learning (PBL), grammar translation.

Introduction: Task-based learning (TBL) is a communicative approach to language teaching. Similar to project-based learning (PBL), it allows students natural opportunities to practice their language skills.

In this post, I'll look more closely at what TBL is and how to use this approach in class.

In the Russian context, language instruction has historically been dominated by the grammar translation method, which aligns with the country's educational traditions that emphasize rigorous academic standards and deep analytical skills. This method focuses on translating texts between Russian and the target language, fostering a strong understanding of grammatical structures and vocabulary. However, this approach often results in limited oral communication skills among learners.

What is task-based learning?

Essentially, TBL involves giving students a task to

complete and supporting them with their English throughout. The task can be pretty much anything as long as it necessitates communication and has a clear goal.

For example:

- creating a poster
- comparing two pictures
- producing a video
- writing a newsletter or blog
- finding a solution to a problem
- performing a play

TBL can also be referred to as:

- TBLT: task-based language teaching
- TBI: task-based instruction

What are the benefits of using a task-based learning approach?

There are many benefits to using TBL in the classroom. Here are a few:

1. Life skills

Task-based learning supports the acquisition of life skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, communication, teamwork, and creativity. These 21st-century skills are highly sought after by employers and will help learners succeed.

2. Real-life tasks

TBL gives students the chance to develop their life skills by providing real-world tasks. What better way to let students apply their learning than to give them a work- or life-related scenario or activity. For example, they could create a detailed itinerary for an upcoming trip or plan their own TV show.

3. Student-centered

Task-based learning is a learner-centered approach that allows lessons to be designed especially for student needs or interests. If learners are particularly interested in Harry Potter, you could have them create a mythical creature, design a magical classroom, or solve the problem of a broken broomstick.

4. Communicative

As TBL requires learners to collaborate on a task, it is naturally communicative. As students work together, they'll be using their language skills to share ideas, negotiate, make plans, and give opinions. As they do this, certain language features will emerge naturally, which you can note down and discuss later.

What are the stages of a TBL lesson?

As with all teaching methodologies, TBL can be used and adapted depending on teaching context and

learner needs. It has a few distinct stages, but you don't need to be strict in following them.

1. Pre-task

As with most lesson introductions, this is a chance to introduce the topic, brainstorm ideas, and give instructions. It can also be helpful to pre-teach any useful vocabulary and let students ask any questions that they might have. You could also give them an example of a completed task or some ideas for inspiration.

2. Task

This is the part where students actually do the task. As tasks can be complex, there are three stages to this:

- Task
- Planning
- Reporting

The Task stage is when students work together in pairs or small groups. The teacher can monitor and take notes of examples of interesting communication. There is no need to correct students' language at this point as the purpose is fluency, confidence building, and task completion.

The Planning stage is when students get ready to tell others about their task. Students make notes of what they'd like to share (e.g., their findings, how they did the task, how they solved any problems that arose, etc.) and decide how they will present the information. They may wish to allocate speakers or scribes. At this stage, the teacher can be available to give advice on language or reporting skills.

The Reporting stage is when students present their work to the class. This could be through a presentation, a poster, a video, a report, or any other communicative method. Students can then give each other feedback, discuss each other's tasks, ask questions, and perhaps even vote for the best piece of work. The teacher can facilitate these discussions, provide language advice, and give feedback.

3. Language focus

The final stage of the lesson is an analysis and practice of the language. The teacher can share some interesting examples of emergent language that the students used throughout the lesson. Students can also make suggestions for other useful language. They can then add these words and phrases to their notebooks and practice them.

Here are some Ellii sections and lessons that you may want to use to try out TBL:

Group Projects: These are similar to task-based learning, though generally carried out over a series of class

sessions.

Nelson Mandela Poster - Part 1 and Nelson Mandela Poster - Part 2: Show students these posters as inspiration and then ask them to create their own. They could choose another person to feature in the poster or give them a theme to focus on (e.g., One day our planet will...).

Current Events: Show students one of these videos (or ask them to choose one). Their task could then be to re-write the voiceover with a different new story, role-play the events, write a news article, or interview someone.

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