

# Teaching Design of English Writing Class based on Task-based Language Teaching Approach

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## Abstract

This paper explores the task-based language teaching approach as a significant method in high school English writing instruction. It begins with a brief introduction to the theoretical background and characteristics of TBLT. Based on this, this paper considers the current situation of English writing teaching in high schools and proposes the teaching design of some units. Therefore, this paper provides some suggestions for English writing teaching in the future. The limitations of the TBLT approach are also discussed, such as the potential challenges in task design and the necessity for appropriate teacher support. In actual teaching, teachers need to combine it with other teaching methods.

## Keywords

Task-based Language Teaching Approach; TBLT; Teaching Approach; Language Teaching.

## 1. Introduction

Writing is an important part of language learning and can effectively promote the internalization of language knowledge. Through writing, students' English knowledge will be constantly consolidated and internalized, which is conducive to the overall development of English proficiency. However, most teachers pay more attention to teaching vocabulary and grammar or focus on training skills, often ignoring the nurturing value behind the writing classroom. According to the New English Curriculum Standard for General Senior High School (2020), Students should develop language skills and build a foundation for authentic language communication through a wide range of specialized and integrated language practice activities, so teachers should focus on cultivating students' comprehensive language learning ability from students' interests, life experiences, and personal feelings, and improve students' active thinking and practical ability through effective interaction. The core idea of task-based language teaching (TBLT) is to simulate the various kinds of activities people engage in using language in society, school, and life, and to combine language teaching with the learners' language application in their future daily lives. This paper aims to design an English writing class in high school based on the task-based approach. It is hoped that it can provide some useful insights and references for teachers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definitions of TBLT

Prahu (1979) proposed a task-based language teaching approach and summarized a complete teaching model in practice. In a task-based class, specific and meaningful tasks are designed by the teacher around specific goals, so learners can complete teaching tasks in various language activities to achieve the learning goals. In the 1980s, the task-based approach had a significant impact on foreign language teaching and learning and is a teaching method that combines theory and practice. Nunan (1999) states that the task-based teaching approach does not list or

present language items in a certain order but rather designs a series of task activities. Cai (2001) believes that the task-based teaching approach promotes target language learning through communication in the native language in classroom teaching. On the other hand, Cheng's (2004) view is that a task-based approach to teaching writing is called task-based language teaching, in which students master the language in depth by doing different types of activities in the classroom and eventually learn to use the language. According to Willis' (1996) task-based teaching model, the teaching process is divided into three stages: the pre-task, the task cycle, and the language focus. In the pre-task stage, the teacher introduces the lesson's topic and the task's objectives. With the help of pictures and personal experiences, the teacher introduces the topic, provides students with useful information and materials, stimulates students' interest, activates students' background knowledge, and prepares them for the task; the task-cycle stage consists of three parts: participation, planning, and report. Teachers naturally introduce the task and make correct modeling to guide students to participate in the task. In this part of the participation task, students acquire relevant knowledge and information through cooperation, share opinions and arguments, and one student records and prepares a report. The language-focus stage consists of two parts: analyzing and practicing. The teacher arranges language practice activities, analyzes the language points, and is responsible for answering doubts. Students first work independently by individuals and then discuss. Finally, there is a presentation and evaluation session in which students revise language errors and practice after combining peer evaluation and teacher feedback. The teaching model is accepted and practiced by many teachers.

## **2.2. Previous Studies on the Application of TBLT to the Writing Class**

The task-based language teaching class has different tasks and activities. Willis (1996) proposed three steps for the task-based approach: the pre-task, the task cycle, and the language focus. Real writing behavior occurs in the task cycle stage. In this part, the teacher needs to withdraw and permit a realistic process of acquiring language to work. Planning for the next stage should be prepared when students are asked to report (Skehan, 1996). When students are planning in groups, the teacher should help them in need of help and solve their confusion and difficulties by walking around the classroom. Muluneh (2018) conducted quantitative research to explore the role of a task-based teaching approach in improving students' paragraph writing skills. The author shows that "students' paragraph writing skills can be developed through the use of task". Instead of exploring the entire writing curriculum program, the study focused on writing skills.

In terms of theoretical research on the application of task-based pedagogy to the teaching of English writing. Jiang (2009) provided a task-based English teaching model, which aims at accomplishing various tasks or activities, through the form of group discussion activities, in the process of accomplishing relatively authentic tasks, to strengthen the interactions between teachers and students and students, to enhance students' learning initiative, to cultivate their cognitive abilities, in order to improve students' communicative competence and communicative quality. Feng and Zheng (2016) explored a task-based reflective English writing teaching model and designed a 16-week teaching experiment. The results show that this teaching model is effective and reflection has a positive effect on the improvement of students' English writing.

## **3. Theoretical Basis**

### **3.1. Social Constructivist Theory**

Social constructivist theory, the sociology of scientific knowledge, has been around for 50 years. Piaget. J (1972) proposed constructivism from a cognitive perspective. Learning is not directly

taught by others, but is the process of learners actively constructing meaning based on existing experience, and is the result of social interaction. Learners' understanding of new information is constructed by themselves through collaborative interaction; knowledge is not a true reflection of the objective world, but rather each student has his or her unique subjective understanding. According to constructivism, students, teachers, tasks and environment constitute the four elements of the learning process, in which teachers and students should establish an equal and mutually supportive relationship, students are the main body of constructing knowledge, and teachers are the guides of the whole constructive process.

### **3.2. Krashen' Input Hypothesis**

Krashen's five hypotheses have been widely recognized and accepted by scholars in the field of second language acquisition. His input hypothesis argues that comprehension of information or access to "comprehensible input" is the only way to acquire human linguistic competence (1985). In task-based class, the role of the task is to provide students with a context for the target language input and to make the language input "comprehensible". To comprehend the new input, students will make understandings and assumptions based on prior knowledge or in context. It is when the language sources are a little bit higher than students' current authentic level that they could work well for learners to develop their knowledge and ability. He assumed the student's original language level as "i" and the level that the student can achieve through effort as "i+1". According to the input hypothesis, the input knowledge of language points provided to students must be slightly higher than their current level to achieve the expected learning effect. Therefore, when teachers carefully select English writing materials, they should consider students' needs to stimulate and maintain their interest and motivation in learning the language.

### **3.3. Swain' Output Hypothesis**

The output hypothesis was proposed by Swain (1985), who emphasized "comprehensible output" and stated that both input and output are essential for learners to improve their language expression. When learners output language, they activate their existing linguistic background and increase the opportunity to analyze the language, thus facilitating language learning. Swain (2008) further discusses the historical development of research on output assumptions and illustrates the importance of output assumptions for second language acquisition. Wen (2008) proposed the important role of output-driven assumptions for English in the workplace and English professional courses for intermediate and high-level learners, and that learning is not just about stocking knowledge, but more importantly about using it. Therefore, in order to ensure teacher-student communication in the classroom and to enable students to achieve positive results in a favorable language environment. There is a need to change the teacher-centered model and an urgent need to encourage the use of the task-based teaching approach.

## **4. Teaching Design of Writing Class based on TBLT**

### **4.1. Creative Writing Tasks based on Textbooks**

There are some articles in the writing section of the textbook for high school English, which will change according to the unit theme. Teachers should consider the differences in students' abilities and thinking and guide students to change the forms of expression according to their understanding and thinking, so as to deepen students' understanding of the article based on improving their own writing ability. Take the writing part of "Unit 5 The Value of Money" in the third book of People's Education Press (PEP) English textbooks for senior high school as an example, "The Million Pound Bank Note" reflects the value of money in the form of drama. Teachers can design the following tasks when carrying out writing activities:

Task 1: Read the text and identify the time, place, characters, events, and developments.

Task 2: Summarize key points.

Task 3: Retell the story.

Task 4: Revise the writing content, requiring correct and fluent statements and logical writing content.

#### **4.2. A Task Context based on the Theme of the Unit**

Task-based teaching can strengthen the autonomy of students' learning and leave enough space and time for students to collect information on their own so that they can have enough materials and information to carry out efficient writing activities. Teachers can create a task situation of the unit theme in writing teaching so that the students can incorporate their feelings and experiences of learning English knowledge into writing teaching, and quickly combine life and writing. Take the writing part of "Unit 1 Festivals and Celebrations" in the third book of PEP English textbooks for senior high school as an example, Teachers can design "Remember the profound holiday experience" task, show the more classic holidays at home and abroad, such as Christmas, Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Water Festival, etc., so that students recall their memorable holiday experiences independently according to the holiday prompts to provide materials for essay construction. In order to help students clarify their writing ideas and improve their writing structure, teachers can invite students to talk about their own festival experiences and ask appropriate questions to strengthen students' logic and improve the quality of their writing.

#### **4.3. The Importance of Evaluation Tasks**

Sharing and evaluation are important parts of teaching activities, are an important way for students to find out their own deficiencies, and are also important ways for teachers to understand students' learning situations. Through sharing and evaluation, students can participate in the evaluation of writing and improve their language ability. By participating in evaluation tasks, students can make clear the standards of essay evaluation and analyze their essays compared to the standards, make clear their deficiencies and strengths, so that students can make up for their deficiencies, constantly optimize their writing styles and writing steps, and build a complete and efficient writing work. Take the writing part of "Unit 2 Wildlife Protection" in the second book of PEP English textbooks for senior high school as an example, teachers can organize students to share and display their own English assignments and carry out evaluation tasks, group discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of different students' writing as well as suggestions for correction to improve the effectiveness of writing activities. Through the application of task-based teaching approach in high school writing teaching, cooperation and evaluation among students can be strengthened. Students can recognize their own deficiencies and mistakes clearly and cooperate to explore ways to correct them, so as to accumulate writing experience and reduce the occurrence of writing mistakes.

### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of TBLT into high school English writing classes offers a dynamic and effective approach to enhancing students' writing skills. By focusing on real-life tasks and meaningful activities, TBLT promotes active learning, allowing students to engage with the language in a context. This approach not only nurtures students' linguistic abilities but also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among students.

Moreover, the proposed writing tasks based on high school textbooks illustrate how TBLT can be practically applied in the classroom. Through tasks that encourage students to explore, share, and evaluate their writing, teachers can facilitate a deeper understanding of writing mechanics

and foster a culture of constructive feedback. This not only helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses but also empowers them to take ownership of their learning journey. All in all, the application of task-based teaching method in high school English writing teaching solves the stereotypical and mechanical problems existing in traditional writing teaching, provides students with sufficient space for creation and thinking, and enables students to fully exercise and improve their language organization ability and language expression ability, so as to effectively improve students' writing ability and promote the sustainable development of students' writing ability.

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