The Practice of TBLT in Teaching Oral Language in Asian Primary Schools

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Abstract. Task-based approach is a new method of teaching practice. It requires teachers to have a full understanding of the syllabus. On this basis, teachers should design a realistic task which students are interested in. Then, students need to brainstorm, and the teacher can give their some simple words and sentences in the process of it. The most important point that TBLT shows is that students achieve the communicative goal and application of language in group work, and language is just a tool. After completing the task, teachers should evaluate the completion of the task and summarize the main points of language learning in the class. Regrettably, however, few studies have found it to work for Asian classes of more than 40 students on average. This paper presents an innovative curriculum design for Asian speaking and writing classrooms to reveal the potential and utility of task-based approaches in large classrooms.

Keywords: TBLT · teaching practice · innovative curriculum design · Teaching in Asia · large classrooms teaching · application of language

1 Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a pedagogical approach to language teaching which the core purpose is to engage students in real-world tasks that are directly related to their needs [1]. The main implementation process is the design of tasks with relevance, incorporating the level of the person being taught (catering to the learners' current level of competence), through classroom practice, participation and motivated learning [2]. One of the key reasons for the worldwide adoption of TBLT is its reliance on real-world tasks and needs analysis, which are an important part of the TBLT curriculum.

Over the past 30 years, TBLT has become an area of interest to second language acquisition (SLA), curriculum designers, language teachers, and teacher educators who utilize tasks rather than language as the unit of instruction in the language classroom [3]. According to Long and Norris, the development and implementation of a TBLT program should follow a set of prescribed steps that are always task-oriented, starting with a task-based needs analysis that identifies the learners' authentic language needs, and the related target tasks needed to match those needs. The purpose of TBLT is to allow students to use their language skills in meaningful interactions outside the classroom,

and Dewey made a similar point in 1938: the taught person acquires skills, including language skills, by completing tasks [4].

While traditional synthetic syllabuses split language into separate grammatical units and require learners to focus more on grammar, TBLT emphasizes authentic tasks, constructs tasks around the results of student needs analysis and sequences them into the syllabus. It also pays attention to the students' reality so that the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction are appropriate to to students' knowledge level and receptivity. By taking into account the students' individual characteristics and personality differences, each individual's talents can be optimally developed. These methodological principles of TBLT distinguish it from other forms of communicative language teaching, one of the most striking manifestations of which is that the "tasks" referred to by other pedagogical developments usually use tasks that revolve around linguistic objectives, rather than syllabus that conform to the subject of the task itself.

2   Literature Review

The TBLT approach originated from Deweys' view of the importance of experience for effective learning, with an emphasis on purposeful and functional language use in the teaching classroom using real-life tasks. The heart of this approach is the task.

TBLT represents an approach to analytic syllabus design [5]. It advocates a learner-centered approach, where tasks are designed to meet the needs of the learners, lessons are developed around everyday scenarios, and textbooks are adapted to meet the needs of students. The opposite design approach is the comprehensive syllabus, which refers to a course that is taught strictly along the lines of a textbook, purely for the purpose of teaching language, with classroom content based on grammar points. An analytic syllabus design differs from a comprehensive syllabus in that they do not divide the grammatical units presented in the classroom, but rather address the overall use of language performed in communicative functions.

Advocates of TBLT argue that the task facilitates language learning by generating meaning-oriented contexts that naturally create opportunities for input, interaction, and output processing [6].

In recent years' education reform, the importance of TBLT in various countries has been increased. For example, new teaching methods have been added to the traditional teaching methods in English language teaching in China. The four teaching methods at this stage include: grammar translation method, listening grammar, communicative language teaching method, and task-based language teaching. In Japan in 2013, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) ruled that English language education should emphasize learner-centered activities, grammar as a supplementary tool to support communication, and a reduced emphasis on translation methods [7]. McDonough refers to task-based instruction as localized TBLT, which is taught in a developed and modified instructional context. This concept is important because one of the key features of TBLT is that it is designed based on stakeholders' needs, which must be contextual in nature [8].

As a result, numerous scholars have also continued to explore the performance of this learning method in application and practice in different educational contexts in

various countries, then raise questions and attempt to optimize it. For example, expected pedagogical changes in task-based localized language teaching in English as a Foreign Language contexts (EFL) classroom has encountered serious resistance, especially in Asia. In Asian countries, researchers report that TBLT is minimally adopted and appears in limited practice in classrooms, thus raising the issue of possible contextualization of TBLT implementation in local contexts [9].

Li studied the implementation of communicative teaching methods in South Korean secondary schools and found that English teachers had an incomplete understanding of the language teaching methods used [10]. As a result, teachers reduced the implementation of this method in their classrooms. In Japan, Gorsuch reported that teachers preferred highly controlled communicative language teaching activities to those that are student-centered. Moser, Harris, and Carle argued that in order for Japanese teachers to provide conversational instruction in English, they need to be educated and have a lot of experience in communicative tasks in English before teaching their students [11]. In Hong Kong, Carless learned about the realization of TBLT in primary and secondary school classrooms and summarized six major issues affecting the realization: teachers 'beliefs, teachers' understanding, available time for task-based teaching, textbooks and topics, preparation and available resources, and students' language proficiency. Despite this, Carless still called for the implementation of contextual task-based pedagogy in Hong Kong classrooms [12].

These studies also highlight that the implementation of task-based instruction in China is influenced by teacher beliefs and contextual factors, such as the rigor of national exams, the availability of resources, and the varying needs and language levels of students. Traditional approaches to language teaching, especially those based on one-size-fits-all textbooks, do not necessarily provide content that meets the needs of current students and their future employers [13]. Unlike the traditional grammar-translation or listening language teaching methods, the task-based approach is developed within a communicative language teaching framework that requires students to actively participate in group activities. The task-based approach suggests that teachers provide students with meaningful classroom tasks and help them accomplish these tasks through modeling, experience, practice, participation, cooperation, and communication [14]. This student-centered, teacher-assisted approach to teaching challenges the Chinese Confucian tradition that emphasizes a hierarchical teacher-student relationship: the teacher is the authority and expert in the classroom, and students behave modestly, listen carefully, and do what they are asked to do [15]. Throughout the TBLT course, learners develop their language skills by mastering the main tasks of the course through the completion of a series of instructional tasks that are designed to provide them with the language practice for the ultimate goal of the course. Instructional tasks are manipulated (in terms of their characteristics, conditions, and complexity) in order to enable the development of certain types of language. Examples include but are ot limited to alternate attention to input, collaborative production, negotiation of meaning, optimization of attention and awareness, and feedback [16].

Research in the EFL context has generally found that traditional approaches to teaching and learning structures still largely dominate classroom practices [17]. In a few cases,

little evidence of TBLT can be identified [18]. In TBLT, tasks can be used in combination with other pedagogical approaches to foreign language teaching, for example, with traditional teaching structures. However, it cannot be ignored that task-based instruction uses tasks as a core component of syllabus [19].

However, some researchers have expressed their concerns about whether task-based instruction can systematically and adequately teach specific grammatical forms of a second language. Ellis responds to this criticism by stating that although task-based pedagogy may not have an explicit grammatical syllabus, TBLT still plays a role in grammar. This is due to a teaching model that focuses on expressing meaning in a meaningful communication with a balance of grammar [20].

3   Research

In the research, this paper will use the methodology of TBLT as an entry point to design a student-oriented lesson in Chinese elementary school oral classroom teaching, reducing the influence of traditional grammar teaching and aiming to escape the limitations of templated oral communication.

The new English curriculum standard for Chinese elementary school states, "The learning of the English curriculum is a process in which students gradually master English knowledge and improve their ability to use the language in practice through learning and practical activities." This points out that the practice of English teaching in China is in urgent need of reform and innovation [21].

The main purpose of the TBLT teaching method is to be student-oriented, with students completing the appropriate tasks in each lesson. However, it has to be said that China is heavily influenced by traditional teaching methods (grammar and translation teaching methods), which means that the focus is on the learning of grammar and the end product of learning is translation. In most classrooms today, the teacher is still the absolute leader in the classroom, selecting the appropriate content from the textbook, and following the sequence and design of the lesson plan. The dominant language in the classroom is Chinese, and the one-way output (from teacher to student) is also a characteristic of this method of teaching, with the teacher taking the lead in asking and answering questions. Traditional education emphasizes the importance of the teacher at the expense of the student, which is contrary to the student-led philosophy of TBLT. In addition, the disadvantage of the traditional teaching method is that the students only "know it in class and know it on the test", but it is difficult to achieve the level of comfortable use in daily life, especially in the speaking items that require a lot of their own output.

Traditional approaches to language teaching are especially those based on textbooks with single content. If teachers choose these directly as teaching content and do not enrich them, they do not meet the needs of students and it is extremely easy to fall into the problem of boilerplate teaching of speaking in teaching. For example, in the English textbook of the 2 grade of elementary school, the answer to the question "How are you?" is "I'm fine"; the textbook answers of "Nice to meet you" is "Nice to meet you too". The teacher takes the children to read and memorize the text in the classroom, and this has formed a kind of stereotype in the long run. When they see the above questions,

Fig. 1. Chinese elementary school English textbook 2nd year

students can reflexively say "I'm fine", "Nice to meet you too", but they may not know the answer of "How are you?" can also be "Pretty good" or "Not bad". The answer to "Nice to meet you" can also be "I did, too" or "Same here". Elementary school materials are intended to introduce students to everyday communication and situations in countries where English is the native language. But in a sense, students' linguistic thinking is also being limited by the textbooks (Fig. 1).

The use of language has been affected accordingly, and expected pedagogical changes in an environment where English is a foreign language have met with serious resistance at the classroom level, especially in Asia. Researchers have reported that in Asian countries, task-based pedagogy has been adopted at low rates and appears in extremely limited practice in the classroom [9]. Thus, there may be reasons for environmental differentiation in the implementation of TBLT in local Asian contexts.

Asian countries are dominated by test-based education, with varying levels of resource availability, student needs, and language proficiency. While test-based education has had some success in China, it has also had bad effects. The exam was originally a manifestation of checking application, but it gradually evolved into studying for the exam. It leads to the polarization of students' scores and incongruous relationships, making most students focus only on their scores and hindering the development of their creative abilities. Exam-oriented education also hinders the improvement of their abilities; it cultivates students with high scores and low abilities, and does not really cultivate high-scoring and high-skilled application-oriented talents.

First, the teachers' position in the classroom should be redefined. The teacher should analyze the needs, abilities and interests of the students and then select the tasks. Richards and Rodgers suggest that teachers should be in an additional role rather than the absolute classroom dominator [22]. They are in most cases only used to be responsible for the

Table 1. Nunan, D., Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 11, 1989.

T- Teacher & Learner Role (i.e. Monitor and Facilitator) & (ic. Conversational partner and Laming Mates)
A- Activity
i) reading questionnaires
i) asking and answering questions about sleeping habits
S- Setting (classroom/ pair or group work)
K- Input (i.e. one questionnaire on sleeping habits)
Goals (ie. Exchange person information)

Table 2. Task 1 for design a specific lesson on oral communication training for daily communication.

Task1 (Fig. 2):
Questions and Answers:
1. Who is he/she?
It is my____(grangfather/fater/uncle/aunt).
2.What is he/she like?
He/she is_____(smart/friendly/lively).

selection and sequencing of tasks, intended to prepare learners for the task and to improve competencies. The teachers select appropriate tasks that best suit the needs of the learners based on their needs and sequence them according to their level of difficulty, and then engage in some pre-tasks that include an introduction to the topic, useful vocabulary and instructions. These instructions are related to the tasks in class so that students understand the reasons for doing so in advance and can see how the tasks relate to possible situations in students' daily lives [23]. Finally, the teacher engages students in the task and allows them to work in groups to arrive at the desired outcome. At the same time, the teacher should monitor their performance and intervene when necessary.

For further explanation of tasks, Nunan defines a "task" as having six components. He writes: "The task is a meaning-focused task that involves learners understanding, producing, and interacting in the target language and analyzing or classifying the task according to its goals, input data, activities, settings, and roles [24]". Consistent with Nunan, Willis emphasizes that tasks are "goal-oriented" in order to achieve outcomes. The six main components of a task are as follows [25] (Table 1).

Based on the understanding of the task above, the structure was used to design a specific lesson on oral communication training for daily communication and a student debriefing presentation that integrates speaking and writing. The specific lessons were designed as follows (Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5):

Table 3. Task design rationale for task 1.

Target	Communicative goal: Students will describe people they know in their daily lives.
	Linguistic goal: Practice using the simple present tense.
Input	Each group of students is given cards with related content; related questions and expressions that can be used for multiple answers.
Conditions	Split information: A certain number of cards are needed to give the students fragmented information, i.e. multiple possible expressions. Two-way interactant relationship: interactive discussion. closed outcome: leads students to a convergent view. a convergent goal: to ensure a controlled order of instruction.
Process	Take a class of 40 students as an example. Pre-preparation: The teacher supplies the students with words and simple sentences that they can use before the task. Design as many characters as possible in the task design to ensure class participation. Group discussion. 1. Groups of six to eight students are given free rein to express their views fully in English in the scenario. 2. One student was given a relevant question describing the picture sequence and another student was given multiple answers to the question. 3. Two students did the same task with different materials and opposite roles. Presentation and debriefing: The students present their discussion based on the discussion, e.g., speech, drama performance, text debriefing, etc. Correcting errors when necessary: After completing the above, the teacher should evaluate the content of the task and guide the students to the correct linguistic usage of certain errors.
Predicted Results	Product: a picture with corresponding names and characteristics. Process: reading, describing, speaking, noticing……

4 Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we designed two TBLT-related perceptions of the changing tasks of teaching oral language in elementary schools, and considering the difficulty of the particular tasks and the very important role teachers play in implementing TBLT programs. Future research is needed to investigate teacher training in this area and the types of materials they use in the initial design of new task-based. With the exposure of traditional educational problems and the emergence of new pedagogies, countries are taking a proactive approach to TBLT in education and are willing to experiment and expand its use. Educators are committed to creating a realistic language teaching environment that emphasizes authentic, communication-driven tasks that require learners to create meaning when asked to do so [26].

Despite the good intentions and goals, there is still resistance in practice. For example, in China, a country with a large population, teachers usually do not have time to attend

Table 4. This is task 2, it is a task designed to combine speaking and reading.

List of questions:
1. Where do you live?
2. What time do you wake up?
3. What do you usually do on Saturday morning?
4. Where did you go to play? How did you feel?
5. What is your favorite sport? Why?
……
Teaching Objective: Describe the weekend life and report in a short essay
Reporting answer reference:
My Weekend
Today I will show you my weekend life. I really felt happy in these days.
On Saturday my mother woke me up at 7 o'clock, and then I walked our dog. My dogs' name is DouDou, she has long curly hair and she is friendly. After that, l took Chinese and Math Classes on my computer.
During the rest time l asked my mom: "Can we play in the park in the afternoon?" She agreed and I felt very happy, so I went to the park with my family. It was so hot today. The sky was blue and you can saw the duck in the lake. I rode a bike around the lake and at that time I wore my new skirt. My handsome father was feeding the duck with some bread. My beautiful mother was flying a kite.
One hour past, we all felt hungry, so we had a picnic in the park. Such us chicken and rice and then we had some fruit.
It was a really full weekend. That all is my weekend life.

Table 5. Task design rationale for task 2.

Target	Communicative goal: Talk about the student weekend.
	Linguistic goal: Practice using the past tense.
Input.	Simply use the past tense to express the questions and answers of the task.
Conditions	split information; two-way interactant relationship required; a closed outcome; a convergent goal.
Process	1. Rationalize the time: students look at the questions and construct their answers individually. 2. Grouping and working together: one person asks the questions, another answers, and then they switch roles. 3. Need to write a short essay and give a class presentation in class.
Predicted Results	Product: Skilled expression of weekend life and a short essay. Process: writing, describing, speaking……

to each student because of the large number of students, and some groups do not have the opportunity to present or listen carefully to each groups' presentation because of the time constraint in the classroom, and cannot give an accurate evaluation. The results of group discussions are also less effective due to time constraints.
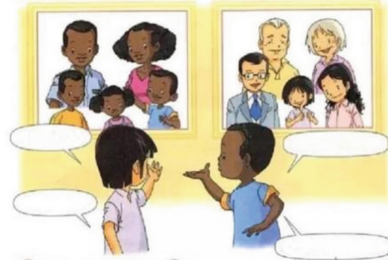
Fig. 2. Chinese elementary school English textbook 2nd year.

Behind the surface of the classroom, the situation lies the irresistible force of certain flaws in a countrys' education system. Test-based education in Asian countries is a traditional education model. It has action as its only goal, focuses only on instilling knowledge from books, and rarely involves students in social activities. It limits students' thinking, narrows their imagination, and hinders the development of creative abilities. Historical reasons and large population and competitive pressures have forced parents, teachers and students to become accustomed to this traditional education system. This has also had a negative impact on educational reform, further limiting the development of the education system. It is evident that the long-entrenched educational climate is far from satisfactory at this stage of practice to make a radical change in some countries. Even in a long time to come, a lot of effort is still needed to actively change the concept and try to reduce the adverse effects of traditional teaching methods that do not meet the requirements of modern teaching.

From a holistic perspective, designing a needs analysis-based, task-based syllabus has the potential to make language instruction more relevant to students' specific practical needs, thus increasing their interest and motivation in language learning and enhancing their enjoyment of the foreign language [27]. Because learners are at the center of their learning in TBLT, they should be responsible for their own learning process and outcomes as opposed to the traditional approach in front of the teacher. Thus, the ability to stimulate learner autonomy is another potential benefit of TBLT. Tasks designed according to students' actual needs are thought to help students understand their language needs and future goals, and to help them learn to monitor their own progress and reflect on their learning [28].

In summary, we find that TBLT, as a new pedagogy (student as subject, selection and design of appropriate tasks), largely fills the gap of traditional education, and that for most people, both attitudes and influence on TBLT have changed positively over time.

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