

Application of TBT in reading class

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Abstract: “TBT” means “task-based teaching”. In a TBT class, students play the central role. In the class where students are provided with plenty of chances to be engaged in activities, the teacher is more like a patient listener rather than a talkative speaker. This paper mainly explores how task-based teaching is used in English reading class.

Key words: reading; task-based teaching; reading skill

There are some reasons for reading. We read for information or for pleasure. Therefore the goals of a reading class are to cultivate students' interest in reading and help students become skilled readers in gaining information. The current situation of reading teaching is not perfect because most reading classes are teacher-centered. The teacher dominates the class by talking all the time while students are only passive listeners. Little time is spared for the students to practice English since the aim of teaching is to inform learners about language knowledge instead of developing their learning skills. Meanwhile, students depend too much on the teacher. As a result, they listen to the teacher passively, take notes and gradually they lose interest in learning English.

1. The definition of task-based teaching

“TBT” means “task-based teaching”. “Task-based teaching, which appears in the 1980's, is a perfect method to refine this situation. In a task-based teaching class, students play the central role. Reading tasks have specific goals, detailed procedures and methods for students to follow. TBT is both student-centered and task-based. In the class where students are provided with plenty of chance to be engaged in activities, the teacher is more like a patient listener rather than a talkative speaker.” The goals of such reading activities are for students to explore and experience language and develop reading skills. In a task-based teaching class, the teacher design tasks from different angles and different forms, which evoke students' interest, and organize lessons in such a way that students can carry out the reading tasks with quality and efficiency.

2. The application of TBT in reading class

Willis puts forward three steps for task-based teaching: (1) Pre-task: the teacher introduces the task. (2) Task cycle: task—students carry out the task; planning—each group prepares how to report their completion of the task to the class; reporting—students report their completion of the task. (3) Language focus: analysis—students analyze and assess the completions of tasks by other groups; practice—students practice the language difficulties under the direction of the teacher.

2.1 Pre-task stage

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First of all, what the teacher should do is to help the learners to define the topic area. An experienced teacher knows the complexity of the task. In this stage, once the teacher introduces the topic, the students will recall and activate their knowledge of the topics and do lots of brainstorming activities. But some of the topics seem to be difficult for some students, for example, rescuing the Temple, the students may have no knowledge of Aswan Dam at all. In this situation, there will be a great amount of preparation for the teacher to do beforehand and the teacher has to highlight useful words and phrases, and help students better understand task instruction and make adequate preparation for the task. The students may read part of a text as a lead into a task.

So at this pre-task stage, priority should be given to encourage the students to combine topic-related words and phrases they know already. A teacher-led brainstorming activity is of great importance at this stage. In addition, the teacher has to introduce vital-related words and phrases that students are unlikely to know. It is often difficult to estimate beforehand how much topic-related language learners will know.

One thing that the teacher should pay more attention to is that the pre-task activities should involve all learners. All the students' should be engaged in the activities because the aim of pre-task stage is to create the students' interest in the topic. If one student falls behind and distracts his or her attention, he or she will have the so-called "chain reaction". Thus no self-confidence is developed. The teacher should go all out to make the students' mind work and be sure that every student in his or her class can concentrate on the topics. This pre-task stage is important in that it is a warm-up stage. When the teacher attends to introduce some reading text, he or she should activate the students' prior experience before they read and create their interest by giving them predictive tasks and interesting activities. If the teacher can work to get the students engaged in the tasks, there is a much better chance that they will read or listen with concentration. The teacher can start with showing a picture for prediction, by asking them to guess what they are going to read on the basis of a few words or phrases from the text, or by having them look at headlines or captions before they read the whole thing.

To sum up, the pre-task phase guarantees a condition for the students to display their communicative ability of the language.

2.2 Task-cycle

The second stage in the task-based teaching is the task cycle, which has three components—task, planning and report.

2.2.1 Task

Output, is likely to help stimulate intake. As teachers, we can have the experience that the students' confidence grows when they realize they can do something without our direct support. Therefore the task stage is a good opportunity for all learners to open their mouth to communicate, working in pairs or small groups to achieve the goals of the task. According to Willis, the teacher's role as monitor should be emphasized at this stage.

In a reading class, the teacher is generally a "facilitator", keeping the key conditions for learning in mind.

In task-based approach, most of the emphasis is laid on learners doing the task, often in pairs or group, guided by the teacher. The teacher is involved in setting out tasks, ensuring that the students can understand the teacher's instruction. Although, learners complete task independently, the teacher still has overall control and the power to stop everything if necessary.

So the teacher monitors from a distance, which differs from a traditional teacher's role. In a task-based reading class, the teacher needs to have courage to give the students tasks to rely on. The teacher should help the students by correcting pronunciation or suggesting better ways of doing the task. Bear in mind what a sensible teacher should do is just like this: to make sure that all pairs or groups are doing the right task; to encourage all

students to take part, no matter how poor their language is; to forgive about errors of form, errors don't matter at this stage; to interrupt and help out only if there is a major communication breakdown; appoint the talkative student to be the group chairperson, whose job is to make sure everyone gets the equal opportunity to speak in the group; to act as a time keeper; timing is very important in a task-based classroom. Tasks can take from one minute to ten or more, depending on the type of the task and its complexity. Too long a time will make the students bored with the activity. So we can set a time limit that is too short rather than too long because it is easier to extend it than to stop the student before the limit is up.

In brief, the teacher is no longer the giver of knowledge, but rather a facilitator and a resource for the students to rely on. The teacher's quality matters whether the implementation of task-based approach will be successful or not. The teacher needs special qualities such as maturity, intuition, psychological knowledge.

2.2.2 Task designing

The hardest thing to do in a reading class is to design tasks. There are six main types of tasks according to Willis.

Listing: In practice, listing tasks tend to strike up a lot of talks as learners explain their ideas. The steps involved are brainstorming and fact-finding. In brainstorming, learners draw on their own knowledge and experience either as a class or in pairs/groups. In fact-finding, learners find things out by asking each other or other people and referring to books, etc. The outcome would be the completed list, or possibly a draft mind map. **Ordering and sorting:** These tasks involve four main processes that are sequencing items, actions and events in a logical way; categorizing; and classifying items in different ways. To fulfill the ordering and sorting tasks, the students should have reasoning ability and common sense.

Comparing: The processes involved are the following: matching to identify specific points and relate them to each other; finding similarities and things in common; finding differences.

Problems solving: Problem-solving tasks require the students' reasoning power. The processes will vary enormously depending on the type and complexity of the problem.

Sharing personal experiences: These tasks encourage learners to talk more freely about themselves and share their experience with others.

2.2.3 Report stage

At this stage, a teacher's role is that of a chairperson, to introduce the presentation, to set a purpose for listening, to nominate who speaks next and to sum up at the end.

Throughout the task cycle, the emphasis has been on students' understanding and expressing meanings in order to achieve task outcomes and report their findings.

2.3 Language focus

In task-based reading class, language points and grammar can not be neglected. Grammar is taught in a context. Before teachers begin to teach grammar, the students are assigned to preview, to let them have the opportunity to observe the language rules, and have a rough idea of how to use the language items. The teachers then begin the grammar teaching by telling the students the function of grammar. We may tell them that we are going to learn how to give advice. The students underline the target language sentences, and then they are asked to read those sentences in class. And the teachers can begin to ask students questions based on the topic sentences are put on the board. Finally, students need time to write down useful words, phrases, and patterns into a languages notebook.

After the teaching of grammar rules, there are some exercises for the students to do. In a reading class, the teacher can ask the students to write a composition after reading.

3. Conclusion

In task-based reading class, quite a variety of reading tasks are designed for students to complete and all the activities are based on student-centered leaning. Thus students' reading interest will be cultivated. In the process of completing reading tasks designed by teachers they will develop their reading competence.

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