A Study on the Impact of Tasked-Based language Teaching on English learning Motivation in the High School

Hu Yan

China West Normal University, Huafeng Street, Shunqing District, Nanchong City,
Sichuan Province, China
Email: carolinehu1314@163.com

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Abstract

In China, English teaching has been popularized. Although there is a great mount of research about enhancing students` learning motivation, using tasks to do so is insufficient. Based on the study of enhancing students' learning motivation through tasks in TBLT, this paper is expected to contribute to improving the quality of English learning for high school students.

First and foremost, this research introduces the background of TBLT and learning motivation, and then reviews the theory and research of TBLT and learning motivation. On this basis, this paper puts forward suggestions to strengthen students' learning motivation in TBLT class. This paper is of certain significance for high school English teachers to enhance students' learning motivation and improve the quality of their English learning.

Key words: learning motivation；Task-based Language Teaching；tasks；English learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Actually, Task-based Language Teaching is a further development of Communicative Language Teaching. It shares the same beliefs, as language should be learned by using in the real life. According to the English Curricular Standards in the Phase of Compulsory Education, teachers should create situation which is close to real life, many language practice activities and teaching methods such as Task-based Language Teaching to cultivate students` ability to use English.

Students' investment in foreign language learning is driven by various factors, both internal and external, which is motivation. Most teachers believe that motivation is one of the factors that have the greatest impact on students' language learning. (Qian, 2014). Just like vehicle, when vehicle is lack of motivation, they cannot move. Therefore, when people are lack of learning motivation, they cannot move on in their learning process. In the process of learning English, learning motivation plays an important role in keeping enthusiasm, initiative, and persistence in the English learning.

1.2 Purpose and Significance

Although students learn English early, starting learning English in the primary school, most of them cannot use English well to solve the problems in real life. Therefore Task-based Language Teaching method is advocated. As a trend, Task-based Language Teaching is widely used. Students are the most important part in the teaching process. If students don`t participate in the teaching activities, no matter what teaching method is used they cannot learn well. Therefore how to use Task-based Language Teaching method to stimulate, cultivate, and to keep students` motivation has high research value.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

This paper consists of five chapters. In chapter 1, a brief introduction of the background information of Task-based Language Teaching method and learning motivation, as well as the purpose and significance is presented. In chapter 2, it relates to the research on Task-based Language Teaching method and learning motivation, which contains the definition, types, factors, and previous studies about them. Chapter 3 includes methods and procedures of the study, while chapter 4 analyzes and discusses TBLT class. Including the major findings, as well as limitations and suggestions for the future studies, the last chapter draws a conclusion of this thesis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition

2.1.1 Definition of Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching has its origins in Communicative Language Teaching, and it is a subcategory of CLT. Educators adopted task-based language learning for a variety of reasons. Some moved to task-based syllabus in an attempt to make usage of language in the classroom truly communicative, rather than the pseudo-communication that results from classroom activities with no direct connection to real-life situations. Others, like Prabhu in the Bangalore Project, thought that tasks were a way of tapping

into learners' natural mechanisms for second-language acquisition, and weren't concerned with real-life communication per se. (Leaver and Willis, 2004）

According to Nunan.D.`s research(2012), Task-based Language Teaching is an approach to the design of language courses in which the point of departure is not an ordered list of linguistic items, but a collection of tasks. It draws on and reflects the experiential and human traditions described above, as well as reflecting the changing conceptions of language itself.

2.1.2 Definition of task

A task is a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some rewards. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book. In other words, task is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at play, and in between. (Long and Porter, 1985)

A task is a piece of classroom work which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process. (Nunan, 1989)

2.1.3 Definition of Learning Motivation

Motivation is the reason for people's actions, desires, and need. Motivation is also one's direction to behavior, or what causes a person to want to repeat a behavior. (Elliot and Covington, 2001) A motive is what prompts the person to act in a certain way, or at least develop an inclination for specific behavior. (Pardee, 1990)According to Maher and Meyer, "Motivation is a word that is part of the popular culture as few other psychological concepts are."(Maehr and Mayer, 1997) Learning Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves the learner to a particular action in language learning.

2.2 Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching is the development of Communicative Language Teaching. As for Communicative Language Teaching, language was seen as a system of expression, rather than as a system of abstract syntactic rules. Language can be described, analyzed, and taught as a system for expressing meanings had a profound effect on language.（Nunan, 2012）However, communicative Language Teaching just pays attention to the using of language. It cannot relate to students` life well. Therefore, Task-based Language Teaching appears. Task-based Language Teaching let students practice their English by participating in various activities which have strong a relationship to students` real life. Compared with Communicative Language Teaching, it stresses students` ability to use English in real life instead in classroom.

2.3 Research on Task-based Language Teaching

2.3.1 Components of a task

Clark, Scarino and Brownell(1994) think that a task is made up by four main components: purpose, context, process, product. Purpose let students understand the reason of doing a task. Being real, simulated or imaginary, Context also involves sociolinguistic issues. Process gets the students to use learning strategies such as problem solving, reasoning, inquiring, conceptualizing and communicating. As for product, there will be some of outcomes, either visible or invisible.

2.3.2 Structure of Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching let students use English as an intermediary agent to complete tasks instead of just pay attention the correction of sentences. Students gain English basic knowledge and the ability of using English by completing the task which is related to real life. According to Jane Willis, Task-based Language Teaching can be divided into three steps that are pre-task, task cycle, and language focus.

Designing tasks, introducing the topic and tasks, illustrating information should be contained in pre-task phase,. In tsk cycle, students take part in tasks individually or cooperatively in the limited time. In language focus phase, researcher uses various methods to check students` outcome. For example, researcher chooses several groups to perform randomly. Then students evaluate their performances about the tasks. Finally, researcher sums up students` performance and emphasize important knowledge points.

2.4 Research on Learning Motivation

There are various types of motivation. According to Brown (1981), there are three kinds of motivation: global motivation, situation motivation and task motivation. Global motivation is learners` general attitude towards language learning. Situation motivation: motivation can be defined as the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. Task motivation is the motivation of specific tasks.

Gardner (1991) and Lambert (1988) are experts of motivation, classifying learning motivation into two categories which include integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. As for integrative motivation, it means some learners have a personal affinity for the people who speak a particular language. With integrative motivation, learners want to be a member of the second language community. Instrumental motivation refers to a practical or pragmatic reason for language study.

Deci and Ryan (1985) put forward the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory. Intrinsic motivation is generally possessed by students who have personal interests in learning something in English and helping to set their goals. A student with intrinsic motivation participates in his leaning for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. Extrinsic motivation derives from an anticipation of rewards such as praise, awards, prizes and evaluation or a fear of punishment. Some kinds of the extrinsic motivation such as avoiding punishment and obtain some reward can harm the good effect of motivation. In this research, researcher focuses on students` intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

3. The Teaching Procedure

In this experiment, researcher designs various tasks to enhance students` learning motivation. According to the structure of the TBLT, there are three steps in TBLT class.

First, pre-task stage, composing of two tasks: warm up and lead in, which aims to attract students` attention and give students some background information. In this stage, researcher should introduce the topic and task to the whole class. Second, task cycle plays the most important part in the whole process. Relevant tasks should be used in the class such as role play, drama and so on to help get knowledge of the language. In this stage, researcher should present tasks and let students fully understand tasks and take part in activities with tasks. What`s more, it is necessary for researcher to give students precise instructions, divide groups and prompt the whole process. After team work, it is time for students to do report in front of the whole class. Third, in language focus stage, students are asked to analyze and practice what they got in class. Then they should review and repeat the task.

The following is an example of this experiment about reading, and the topic is "my first ride on a train" chosen from Unit 3.

Stage1 Pre-task

Step1 Warm Up

First, in order to attract students` attention and draw forth the topic, researcher used a guessing game. Giving students two clues to let them find out which country it is. The first clue was "the central part of the country is covered with desert". The second clue was"it is famous for some rare animals, such as kangaroo and koala". When, students gave the right answer, researcher led students to the second step.

Step2 Lead in

Researcher could introduce some information about Australia and what students were going to read by using video and pictures.

Stage2 Task Cycle

After students knew what they were going to read. Then researcher assigns tasks and divides students into nine groups.

Task1: Please read the text and discuss with your group members to find out what did Alice Thompson do on the train within 12 minutes. Twelve minutes later, researcher chose 4 groups at random to let student report their results.

Task2: Please read the text again and draw a map about what scenery did Alice Thompson see during her trip on the train within 12 minutes. Then researcher invited 4 students to use his map to retell.

During the task stage, researcher could take part in one group or walk around the whole classroom to monitor the whole activities and give students assistance to prompt tasks.

Stage3 Language Focus

After reading tasks, students were more familiar with sharing their travel experience by using past tense time expression. Therefore, the final task is to let students share their travel with their partners.

4. Discussion about TBLT class

English teaching can be roughly divided into parts, teaching pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers can use TBLT in all of the above English class. Under the Structure of Task-based Language Teaching which includes pre-task, task cycle, and language focus, teachers can add homework to consolidate students` knowledge if it is necessary.

Generally speaking, when teachers use TBLT method, they should pay attention on at least six aspects as follows, otherwise, bad results will be achieved. First, activities should be purposeful and actionable. Therefore, when teachers design tasks, they should fully understand what students can achieve after tasks. Second, teachers should give full consideration to students' life experience and interests when they design tasks. Third, Activities should be conducive to improving students' practical language skills. If tasks cannot practice students` ability of using the target language, the tasks are valueless. Fourth, Activities should be conducive to the development of students' ability to solve practical problems in English. Fifth, when teachers design tasks, they should take the requirements of openness about tasks into account. Sixth, teachers should change their roles in class according to the requirement of tasks. For example, at the same time, teachers are not only participants in class activities, but also organizers, promoters and material providers, which mean that teachers should have very rich knowledge reserve and high professional skills. What`s more, teachers not only transmit knowledge to their students but also teach students the skills of independent learning through task-based activities. Although task-based teaching is not a panacea, the above points can be noted to maximize its role.

5. Conclusion

According to the TBLT and motivation theory, teachers should design all kinds of tasks to give learners chances to use the language they are learning in TBLT class. What`s more, TBLT will also develops students` ability of communicative competence and thinking and helps the students to learn how to communicate，how to think about questions，how to make a decision and how to deal with an emergency．By doing the tasks, students can experience the sense of achievement and realize their own value so that they can learn English with strong motivation.

I`d like to give some suggestions for future research based on my research. First, future researcher should analyze more samples to support their research, which can make research accurate. Second, researchers should set the duration of the research as long as possible to show long-term impact of TBLT in English learning. Third, researchers had better use TBLT in all grades of the middle school. Forth, the researcher notice that many students are not interested in learning English．Some students are unwilling to spend time in fulfilling the tasks inclined to share the achievement of group work. Therefore, researchers can research how to enhance students` interest in English learning and what influence students` interest in English learning.

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