



MODULE 3

3.2 TASKS AND TYPES OF TASKS

TBLT organize lessons or activities by **tasks**.

A task is an activity based on a real-world situation. A task therefore includes a **communicative problem to be solved**, and is **intended to convey a message**. This allows the student to understand, use, and then learn a language.

A task is complete if the students **convey the message**, even if the language used is not perfect.

Rod Ellis defines the task by following 4 characteristics:

1. The main characteristic of the task is its meaning, because the students' main goal is to produce, understand, and convey a message
2. Another characteristic is the "gaps", which tasks must have: it is a "void" to be filled. Gaps are the communication problems to be solved.

There are 3 types of gaps:

Information gap, which is a situation that includes transferring information from one person to another. For example, you may ask your students to give someone directions. In this way, students have to talk and work in groups or pairs to get the information and fill this "gap". This is a great way to inspire your students to talk and work together.

Opinion Gap, which is when students discuss their preferences, emotions, or ideas about a topic, all from the same source information. For example, you can ask your students to talk about political or social issues, and look for information that would support their opinions.

Reasoning gaps, which is when students need to come up with solutions to a problem. For example, you may ask your students to solve a riddle or find the best way to get from point A to point B.

3. Another characteristic of a task, is that the goal of the task is communication, not grammatical accuracy. Task assessment is considered positive when the goal is met, not if the student used the correct language.



For example, if the task is to write a motivational letter for a job, the task is complete if the person receiving the application understands what the applicant wanted to communicate.

4. The final characteristic of a task is that it relies on using students' own resources. This is because students must fill in the "gap" and achieve a communication goal, using only their own knowledge, linguistic and non-linguistic, including gestures.

For example, you can ask students to invite their friends to a party, without them knowing what kind of language structures to use.

Students must then find a way to make their friends understand what they want to say using the language they know, or gestures. This feature is what makes the real difference between TBLT and more traditional teaching approaches, where students are given from the beginning by the teacher the language resources they need to communicate.

For example, the teacher generally first explains the grammar rules for using a certain past tense form, and only then do students do exercises to test what they have just learned. Only then, they can start communicating in the studied language through exercises like role-plays.

Let's look at an example of a task.

Give directions to a tourist, to get from the train station to the museum. One student plays the tourist, the other plays the local resident in a role play.

This is a task because it references something that can happen every day, it focuses on meaning and not on using the most appropriate vocabulary or grammar.

The most important thing is to make sure the tourist understood the directions.

Also, there is an information gap, because the tourist does not know something that the local person does, and there is a transfer of information between the two.

The evaluation of the task is based on whether the tourist has actually arrived at the museum; if they have arrived, then the task is positive and complete.

Let's now look at what a task is NOT.

In the example of the role-playing game explained earlier, the teacher could also have explained to the two students what kind of vocabulary, grammatical structures,



and ideas they should use by giving them a sheet of paper with the structure of the dialogue to follow.

Tourist (student A) stops a local (student B) on the street.

A asks B where the supermarket is,

B gives A directions, following the map and using words like "turn right", "turn left", "behind", "in front" etc....

B asks for clarification,

A answers.

B thanks A

This is still role-playing here, but it is not a task, it is just to do the exercise. All the students have to do here is to find the most suitable and correct language to convey the message, which has already been given to them by the exercise.

Variety of tasks:

TASK TYPES	EXAMPLES
STINGS	Brainstorming Fact-finding Games based on listings: quizzes, memory and guessing
ORDERING & SORTING	Classifying Ranking ordering Sequencing in the correct order
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING	Finding similarities and differences (in texts, videos, pictures)
PROBLEM SOLVING	Logic problem prediction
PROJECTS AND CREATIVE TASKS	Newspapers Posters Surveys
SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	Story telling Memories
MATCHING	Words/phrases to pictures