

MODULE 1

1.3 - INTERVIEW WITH A LANGUAGE TEACHER

In this video we will have an interview. Today with us is Erica! Erica, welcome and could you please introduce yourself quickly

Hi Vidjaya, thank you for having me. I'm Erica Capilano, I'm a teacher. I normally teach Italian to foreigners and sometimes English to Italian people and I have my experience with a task-based language teaching approach is focused on my experience during internships but also during my lessons in my everyday life and I also wrote a thesis on TBLT. Where we were what we will call TBLT during this interview because i wrote my thesis on that for my bachelor degree

Thank you! So let's start right away and could you explain to us a little bit about what is TBLT the task-based language teaching approach.

It's an appropriate to teach a second language based on the use of a task. The task is the core units of the lesson and the most important element this approach seeks to engage learners and students by introducing an interactive authentic language use by performing a task. The tasks are normally done in groups or in pair but it can also be done individually by the students.

So how does this developed approach differ from a more traditional approach? Because it's not very common yet to teach in this way...

It's very different because the conversation is normally a means to reach a point to reach a goal but here is the whole thing, is the core of the unit, is the keystone of the whole lesson. It's not just a means but the conversation is the way they learn.

The communicative approach is normally divided into three moments

We could call out the 3Ps:

Presentation;

Practice;

Production.

So the presentation goes first and the teacher normally presents the grammar rules or the main topic, etc... Then there is the practice on those topics and then there is the production.

So the subjective and individual production from the students they have to prove that they understood what they would. What they've seen from the teacher here in the task-

based language teaching approach: the production is the main thing and it's the first thing. So the main difference here is that we, the students, start from themselves and from their real needs because when they talk to each other, when they collaborate to solve the task, they suddenly realize what is missing there, what do, what they need really to move on, to solve the task, to be an advanced speaker.

The focus on form in the TBLT approach is just how to use language in an authentic interaction between the students. Also one of the main differences is that obviously there is not as much participation of the class in the communicative approach, while in a TBLT approach the class is going on with their task and the teacher is just you a guide. Also another one: normally in the communicative approach there is no room for the unexpected. Normally you plan the lesson and you go on with that, in the TBLT approach we normally do the difference between tasks as a plan so what we planned as a task and just as a process the task as a process is as important as well because the task as a process is based on the real problems that comes out from the lesson itself and so even if you thought about something different you realize during the lesson that probably your students need something else to be cleared out and so there is always space for new stuff in the TBLT approach.

So as you already said the TBLT approach brings out basically this idea from the students on what they need. What else would you say are some of the benefits that TBLT gives both to students and also to the teachers?

I would say as I said that the emphasis on the learning by doing is very important because it's linked to the natural acquisition of language, how we normally learn a language that is by conversation and by doing things but there is also the attention to the real needs of the people and one of the aspects that I praise most is the fact that the students have to start from themselves and to use their linguistic resources to solve the task.

Since the focus is on meaning and they can use what they already know and the other languages that they know to solve the task, I think this is very important to them because that means that they can already count on themselves, they already have resources. And another important aspect in my opinion is that during the task process they have to convey meaning with the other students, that meaning has to be negotiated.

So they have to open themselves to other people and express their opinions, taking decisions or making decisions altogether and that is a very important aspect also for the relations between the students.

So there are obviously many benefits for the students. Would there also be some of the benefits for teachers?

Sure! I would say that this is a very practical approach that can be used in informal situations and in very familiar atmosphere. The usefulness, the functionality of this tool is that can be done with the use of external tools like as we said videos, music, films, etc... So you can use like concrete and useful material that comes from the real world to study and it's also very intuitive. So even if the teacher is just a guide, it needs to

be done properly and to be planned. Also if they can change during the task and the process but it's usually a very intuitive way of teaching.

I think it's quite easy to understand how it is to be done and also I think one of the main pro is the fact that we can use everyday language and everyday settings so it's very natural for the teacher to use that, to bring their reality, their everyday life into a lesson.

And when you have a final tip for any new teacher who would like to use TBLT?

It can be a very fun way of teaching but it needs to be done in a proper context. First of all I would suggest you to have a good relationship first with your class, so a trustworthy and familiar relationship with them, because otherwise facing and solving a task could feel awkward or uncomfortable for some people that don't know you well or that doesn't know the class well...because when you have to report, the whole thing to the class you have to have a serene and cold atmosphere in which you don't feel judged, because the students need to know that making mistakes is okay and when they present them they don't have to feel ashamed of that.

So I would just suggest you to know them first and then to propose the right task to them.

On second thought, I would say that the group needs to be organized well. That meaning that you have to organize groups in a very balanced way with similar levels because if one of them is an advanced level and one of them is a beginner that could be unfair from the beginner because it needs to be guided more and maybe it will feel like uncomfortable in a group where they cannot speak up as well as the other people.

And then I would say only do that if you have the right time to do that because it can take time and it's not quick probably like... the more traditional ways are quicker than the TBLT

But I think it's worth it anyway and also because it's based at least at the beginning it's more based on fixing the language than on discovering new things. Of course you can discover and you discover new things but it's more about starting from them and then fix and include, add what they don't know about that.

Thank you very much that was very helpful and some very nice tips and ideas for new language teachers. So thank you again!

Thank you it was my pleasure