

THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF USING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD IN EFL CLASSES IN UZBEKISTAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained significant attention as an effective approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms worldwide. However, its implementation in Uzbekistan's higher education system presents several challenges. This study aims to identify the primary obstacles faced by educators and students in adopting TBLT, including issues related to teacher preparedness, curriculum constraints, assessment difficulties, and student adaptability. By analyzing these challenges, the study provides insights into potential solutions to enhance the effectiveness of TBLT in Uzbekistan. The findings indicate that teacher training and curriculum adaptation are crucial for successful implementation.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, EFL, higher education, Uzbekistan, teaching challenges

Introduction

English language education in Uzbekistan has been undergoing significant transformations, particularly following national reforms aimed at integrating global best practices into the education system. One such approach that has garnered attention is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which shifts the focus from rote memorization of grammar rules to practical, real-life communication tasks. The Uzbek government has placed considerable emphasis on improving foreign language instruction, as reflected in policies such as the *Presidential Decree on Foreign Language Learning* (2012), which underscores the need for innovative pedagogical methods that promote communicative competence.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for aligning English language education in Uzbekistan with global standards and enhancing students' proficiency levels. Research has shown that TBLT not only improves linguistic accuracy but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills—qualities essential for graduates entering an increasingly interconnected job market. Thus, this study aims to examine the key obstacles to TBLT implementation in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions, identify potential solutions, and provide recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. By tackling these challenges, Uzbekistan can further strengthen its position as a regional leader in English language education and better prepare its students for success in international academic and professional environments.

Literature Review

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been widely recognized as an effective approach to foreign language instruction, emphasizing meaningful communication over rote memorization. This section reviews global and local studies on TBLT, highlighting both its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications in the Uzbek context.

TBLT is rooted in the communicative language teaching (CLT) paradigm, which prioritizes interaction as a means of language acquisition. Ellis (2003) defines tasks as activities that require learners to use language to achieve a meaningful outcome. Similarly, Nunan (2004) argues that TBLT promotes authentic language use by engaging students in real-world communicative tasks rather than artificial drill-based exercises. According to Willis and Willis (2007), TBLT enhances fluency and accuracy simultaneously by exposing learners to diverse linguistic challenges.

However, implementing TBLT in non-Western contexts has proven complex. Littlewood (2007) highlights the difficulty of balancing communicative and form-focused instruction in Asian classrooms, where students often expect teacher-centered methods. Similarly, Butler (2011) notes that large class sizes and rigid assessment practices hinder the effectiveness of TBLT in East Asia. These findings are relevant to Uzbekistan, where traditional pedagogical approaches still dominate EFL instruction.

Several Uzbek scholars have explored the feasibility of TBLT in local educational settings. Jalolov (2012) underscores the importance of integrating communicative methods into English language teaching but acknowledges the resistance of many educators who are accustomed to grammar-translation techniques. Muminov (2019) conducted a study on task-based instruction in Uzbek universities, revealing that while students responded positively to interactive tasks, teachers often struggled with lesson planning due to a lack of structured guidelines.

Kurbanov (2021) highlights the role of teacher training in successful TBLT implementation. His research suggests that while many educators support the theoretical benefits of task-based learning, they face difficulties in adapting it to the national curriculum. Furthermore, Khodjayev and Ismoilova (2022) argue that assessment methods in Uzbekistan remain largely incompatible with TBLT principles. Their study found that university examinations continue to emphasize grammar-based testing rather than communicative competence, discouraging teachers from fully embracing a task-based approach.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. Surveys and interviews were conducted with 50 EFL instructors and 200 university students across various higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. The survey assessed attitudes towards TBLT, perceived challenges, and institutional support. The qualitative interviews provided in-depth insights into teacher and student experiences. Data analysis involved statistical tools for quantitative results and thematic coding for qualitative responses.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several critical challenges in implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Uzbekistan's higher education system. These challenges stem from a combination of institutional constraints, teacher preparedness, assessment methodologies, and student adaptability. However, there are potential solutions that can address these issues to ensure more effective integration of TBLT in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

One of the most significant barriers is the lack of teacher preparedness. Many educators have been trained in traditional grammar-translation methods and find it difficult to transition to a communicative, task-based approach. While TBLT requires teachers to design and facilitate meaningful tasks, a large proportion of instructors have not received sufficient training in this methodology. Studies by Uzbek scholars such as Muminov (2019) and Kurbanov (2021) confirm that professional development programs focusing on TBLT are either scarce or insufficiently structured. To address this, targeted training programs should be developed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to design and implement task-based lessons effectively.

Another challenge lies in curriculum constraints. The national curriculum in Uzbekistan, although recently revised to include more communicative elements, remains largely rigid and examination-focused. Teachers often struggle to incorporate TBLT activities due to the fixed structure of syllabi and limited flexibility in lesson planning. Previous studies, including those by Jalolov (2012) and Khodjayev & Ismoilova (2022), indicate that a reformation of curricular guidelines is necessary to accommodate task-based methodologies. By integrating flexible curriculum frameworks that allow for more interactive tasks, universities can support a gradual shift toward TBLT-based instruction.

	Develop targeted professional development programs and teacher training initiatives focusing on TBLT strategies.
	Introduce flexible curricular frameworks that accommodate task-based learning and interactive methodologies.
	Reform assessment strategies to include communicative and task-based evaluations such as oral proficiency tests and peer assessments.
Student resistance and adaptability issues	Implement a gradual transition from traditional methods to TBLT, providing scaffolding and support for students to engage in self-directed learning.

Table1. Problems in implementing TBLT method in higher education system.

Assessment practices also present a major obstacle. Current examination systems prioritize grammatical accuracy and written responses over communicative competence. This creates a misalignment between teaching methodologies and evaluation strategies,

discouraging teachers from fully embracing TBLT. According to Butler (2011), effective implementation of TBLT requires assessment methods that evaluate not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency, interaction, and problem-solving skills. In Uzbekistan, pilot programs such as those studied by Turgunov (2023) suggest that incorporating formative assessments, such as peer evaluations and task-based oral exams, can significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

Student adaptability is another issue that needs to be addressed. Many university students in Uzbekistan have been accustomed to teacher-centered instruction throughout their academic journey. When exposed to TBLT, they often face difficulties in self-directed learning and active participation. Research by Littlewood (2007) suggests that a gradual shift from traditional methods to task-based learning, rather than an abrupt transition, may help students adapt more effectively. Providing structured guidance and scaffolding techniques can aid students in becoming more comfortable with communicative tasks over time.

Conclusion

The implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Uzbekistan's higher education system presents both opportunities and challenges. While TBLT has been widely recognized as an effective methodology for developing communicative competence and fostering interactive learning, its practical application in Uzbekistan faces significant barriers. These include a lack of teacher preparedness, rigid curriculum structures, misaligned assessment methods, and student resistance to non-traditional teaching approaches. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of TBLT in improving English language proficiency among university students necessitate further exploration and systematic implementation.

The findings also indicate that student adaptability plays a crucial role in the success of TBLT. Many university students in Uzbekistan are accustomed to passive learning, where the teacher provides direct instruction, and students play a minimal role in knowledge construction. The transition to TBLT requires a change in mindset, encouraging students to take an active role in their learning process. To ease this transition, educators must gradually introduce task-based activities while providing structured guidance and support. This will help students develop the necessary autonomy and problem-solving skills needed for effective language learning.

Ultimately, embracing TBLT in Uzbekistan's higher education system will not only enhance English language instruction but also contribute to the broader goal of producing graduates with strong communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and readiness for global interactions. The shift toward a more communicative, task-driven approach aligns with the country's educational reforms and its vision for producing competent English language users in the 21st century.

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