The Study of Task-Based Language Teaching in English Reading in Senior High School

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Abstract: This study aims to introduce the language teaching approach, Task-Based Language Teaching, and explains its application in reading teaching in senior high school by designing a teaching reading class. This approach can not only enhance students' learning interest, but also improve students' reading ability significantly. In addition, the paper also puts forward some implications for English reading teaching.

1. Introduction

As we all know, reading plays a significant role in English learning for senior high school students, which is one of the most effective ways to get information, enlarge vocabulary and improve cultural awareness. According to The *National English Curriculum Standard* (2001) for senior high schools, Level 6-level 9 are designed for the senior high school students, and every senior high school student is required to reach level 7 at least where they are able to get information form general material, are able to understand the main idea and the author's writing intention, are able to reason through clues in the article, are able to get information from the Internet, are able to read English newspapers suitable for senior high-school students.[1]. A great of scholar have put forward different methods of teaching, among which task-based language teaching (TBLT) is attached great importance. TBLT proposes that language is meaningful to the learner supports the learning, and supports meaningful tasks in the process of learning. Besides, it can strengthen the interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, the application of the Task-based Language Teaching Approach in the learning process can facilitate the learning effectiveness, help students achieve a sense of achievements, motivate the learners, improve the reading ability. This paper aims to introduce the TBLT in teaching reading by designing a model class of senior one class. At the same time, the paper also makes some proposals for the application of TBLT for the purpose of improving the teaching.

2. The Definition of Task-Based Language Teaching Approach

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) refers to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instructions in language teaching [2]. It is the logical development of Communicative Language Teaching, as it shares several principles with communicative language teaching which developed in 1980s. The key assumptions of task-based instruction are summarized as follows: The first one is that the focus is on the process rather than the product. Second, basic

elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning. Third, learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposeful while engaged in the activities and tasks. Fourth, activities and tasks of a task-based syllabus are sequenced according to difficulty. Fifth, the difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learner, the complexity of the task, and the degree of support available [3].

2.1 The Definition of Tasks

Although Task-Based Language Teaching proposes the notion of "task" as a central unit of planning and teaching, the definitions of the "task" vary in TBLT. Nunan defines the communicative task as a piece of classroom work which involves learner in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on the meaning rather than form [4]. Task are activities which have meaning as their primary focus. Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and task generally bear some resemblance to real life language use [5]. For Prabhu, a task is an activity which require learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process thought, and which allow teacher to control ad regulate that process [6].

3. Three Models of Teaching Reading

3.1 Bottom-Up Model

Some teachers teach reading by introducing new vocabulary and new structures first and then going over the text sentence by sentence. Reading comprehension is based on the understanding and mastery of all the new words, new phrases, and new structures as well as a lot of reading aloud practice. In reading, information is transmitted along a linear process from the recognition of letters to words, to phrases, to clauses, to sentences, to paragraphs, to the whole text.

3.2 Top-Down Model

A different view believes that one's background knowledge plays a more important role than new words and new structures in reading comprehension. That is also know the schematic knowledge. Therefore, in the process of reading, the teacher should teach the background knowledge first so that students equipped with such knowledge will be able to guess meaning from the printed page.

3.3 Interactive Model

The current theory views reading as an interactive process. Reading comprehension is based on the interactive process between visual information obtained from the reading materials and the readers' prior knowledge of language, of the world, of text types. During the process of reading, the brain receives visual information and at the same time, it interprets or reconstructs the meaning the writer had in mind when he wrote the text.

4. Teaching Design

4.1 Teaching Material

The textbook is from New Senior English for China, Student's Book 1 Beijing: People's Education Press, 2007. This unit examines different kinds of friendship. In these readings from *The*

Diary of Anne Frank, students will see how a lonely and frightened teenager copes with a very unusually stressful situation.

4.2 Teaching Objectives

Knowledge aims:
Students are be able to master the key words and expressions, such as upset, ignore, calm, curtain, be concerned about, walk the dog, go through set down, face to face, fall in love with.
Ability aims:
Students can improve their reading ability such as skimming, scanning, increasing reading fluency.
Students can improve their predicting ability in the context.
Emotional aims:
Students can understand the importance of friendship, learning how to make friends with others.
Students can understand the cruelty of the German Nazis in the Second World War.

4.3 Teaching Procedures

Step 1. Warming Up: A Survey
Are you good to your friends? Do the following survey to learn about the friendship. If time allowed, teacher will write the information on the blackboard.
Task 1. Do a survey
The purpose of the Warming Up section is to introduce the topic to the students in an interesting way, reminding them of what they have already known and let them to think about it. It also does a bit of preparations for the learning tasks.
Sept 2. Pre-reading
Pre-reading activities refer to tasks that students do before they read the text in detail.
Task 2.
a. Why Do You Need Friends? Make a List of Reasons Why Friends Are Important to You.
b. Does a Friend Always Have to Be a Person? What Else Can Be Your Friend?
c. Skim the First Paragraph of the Reading Passage Below and Find Who Was Anne's Best Friend.
The purpose of the pre-reading activity is to begin to focus students' attention on the main topic of the activity or as an activity to do after the reading. It prepares students to think critically about the topic and provides them with the opportunity to connect some aspect of the topic to their own lives. Moreover, it is important that the students learn to guess what the reading text might be about by looking at the heading, maps or pictures.
Step 3. While-reading
The reading introduces the students to Anne Frank's story. The part of the diary entry presented here reveals Anne's longing for a normal life after having been in her hiding place for almost two years.
Step 4. Post-reading
In this stage, teacher has to design tasks which are relevant to the text being studied and appropriate to the students' level. The tasks can fulfill several functions, whether they are used in an extensive or an intensive reading. Post reading tasks should provide the students with opportunities to relate what they have read to what they already know or what they feel. In addition, post reading tasks should enable students to produce language based on what they have learned.
Task 3. Gap-filling
I lived in <u>Amsterdam</u> in the <u>Netherlands</u> during <u>World War II</u>. My family were <u>Jewish,</u> so we had

to <u>hide away</u> for a year and a half in order <u>not to be caught</u> by Nazis. During that time, I wasn't able to <u>go outdoors</u> for so long that I had <u>grown so crazy</u> about everything to <u>do with</u> nature. Once, I decided to look at the moon <u>at midnight</u> by myself. But I didn't <u>dare to</u> open the window to see the night <u>face to face</u> because I was afraid of being discovered by the Nazis.

This task provides the key words and phrases of the passage, students are encouraged to use as many as different words or expressions as possible to fill the blanks. The passage is based on the comprehension of the text, and students have the opportunity to output the language they have learned.

Step 5. Homework

The students are asked to write something based on what they have read.

Miss Wang has received a letter from Xiao Dong. He is also asking for some advice. Read the letter carefully and help Miss Wang answer it.

4. Conclusion

This paper discusses Task-Based Language Teaching in English teaching with a class design in senior high school. TBLT is a method of the instruction under communicative language teaching, which emphasize taking various tasks as the center of language teaching. In TBLT. In TBLT class, there are many advantages in teaching. Firs of all, tasks provide opportunities for both input and output for language acquisition. Second, tasks can improve learners' motivation and therefor promote learning. Third, TBLT is students-centered. Many tasks will be done in pairs or small groups, and require students to cooperate with each other. Despite its benefits, there are also some potential constraints that teachers need to be aware of. The first is that it may not be effective for presenting new language. The second constraint is time as teachers have to prepare task-based activities very carefully. Teachers need to plan thoroughly and find suitable materials. This makes demands on the teacher, who is already busy with many other professional duties. The third is the culture of learning. Some students may find it difficult to adapt to TBLT. To conclude, TBLT is effective in teaching reading, improving learning interests, expanding classroom interaction, and achieving a sense of achievement, but not a panacea to solve all the teaching problems. Teacher should choose the appropriate approaches and methods according to the teaching context, students' needs, teaching objectives and teaching materials.

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