

**COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT  
AMONG STUDENTS OF NON-LINGUISTIC UNIVERSITIES  
WITH THE HELP OF TBLT APPROACH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
LESSONS**

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***Annotation.** The article contains a comparative analysis of PPP and TBLT approaches to the foreign language learning including the detailed description of the main stages of teaching and lessons planning in the framework of each approach; the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches are also considered in the article. It is also emphasized that using TBLT approach in groups of students from non-linguistic universities with a low level of foreign language proficiency (A2) is rather difficult. In such situations authors recommend considering the traditional PPP method, which allows practicing and fixing the necessary speech patterns.*

***Keywords:** PPP approach, TBLT approach, BPL-approach, explicit and implicit learning, communicative competence development, communicative tasks, communicative skills.*

In recent years, many researchers and educators have been discussing which approach to teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university is the most effective in planning, structuring and conducting practical classes. In this article, we

set the task of analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the popular TBLT (task-based language teaching) [1] and the more traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) [2] approach to learning a foreign language at a non-linguistic university. Typically, task-based teaching is opposed to the traditional PPP approach. Therefore, to understand the peculiarities of TBLT better, let's first consider PPP.

So, the usual PPP lesson is as follows:

- ✓ the teacher introduces the language unit to the student in context so that the student remembers its meaning. This can be done in different ways, using text, hypothetical situation, dialogue, etc.
- ✓ the student is then asked to perform certain practical exercises with which he can memorize and practice new language units. This can be the choice of answer options, filling in the blanks, etc. The purpose of this stage is to teach the student to use these units correctly and get a little familiar with them.
- ✓ at the end, students move on to the production stage, or to the free practice stage. Students are given some kind of communicative task (for example, a role-playing game), the purpose of which is to teach students to generate free speech in a foreign language using new vocabulary and the one they already know. [3]

This approach seems logical, but teachers who actively use it note the following problems they face:

- ✓ it seems that the students have mastered the new vocabulary and are free to use it in the lesson, but after a few sessions they either reproduce the material incorrectly or do not reproduce it at all;
- ✓ students practice new material and overuse it, making their speech sound unnatural;
- ✓ students do not integrate the material they just learned in production because they are able to successfully complete the assignment using already mastered elements and structures with which they feel confident. [4]

The TBLT approach is designed to compensate for these shortcomings. In a lesson that takes place using this approach, the teacher does not predetermine the vocabulary to be learned. The lesson is built around the completion of the main task,

and the studied vocabulary is determined by the results of its completion. This lesson includes the following steps:

**Pre-task.** The instructor introduces the topic and gives the students directions on what to do in the next step. He will also help students with vocabulary to complete the assignment. Often the preparatory phase includes playing the video with the people doing the task. This allows students to understand more clearly what is required of them. Students can take notes and spend some time preparing.

**Task.** Students complete the assignment in pairs or groups using their knowledge, while the teacher oversees the process and helps as needed.

**Planning.** Students prepare a short oral or written presentation of the results of the assignment. In their mini-groups, they discuss what they are going to say.

**Report.** Students give a presentation to the whole group orally or read a written presentation. The instructor chooses the order in which the speakers present their talks and possibly gives the students quick feedback on their presentation. At this stage, we can also play the recording to the students with other students completing this activity.

**Analysis.** The teacher highlights various aspects of students' presentations for analysis. This can be grammar, vocabulary and the relevance of the vocabulary used. The students and the teacher then discuss and analyse these aspects together.

**Practice.** The teacher chooses the vocabulary and grammar to practice based on the results of the assignment. Students complete a variety of practice exercises to help them master new material more confidently.

Task-based language teaching is one of the communicative methods of teaching English. The main idea of the TBLT approach is to place the student in a communicative situation and ask him to complete a communicative task or problem. In fact, a communicative situation is any life situation where speech is used, so this includes small talks with former classmates, and booking an apartment a day before the start of the vacation, and verbal squabble with vendors in a conventional marketplace.

Vocabulary and grammar are not always the focus of the assignment. It is assumed that your students have already learned grammar and vocabulary earlier using the coursebook, and now they are perfecting their skills. So, in our opinion, the TBLT methodology is more suitable as an auxiliary approach than as a leading one in the classroom.

*Assessment of students.* The effectiveness of such a task is evaluated by the performance result i.e. whether the communication goal has been achieved or not.

Types of TBLT assignments are as follows:

*Information-gap activity.* It involves the transfer of information from one person to another. An example of this type of assignment is pair work, in which each student of the pair has only a piece of information (for example, half of the story) and tries to convey it orally to another.

*Reasoning-gap activity.* Students receive information, then using the method of reasoning, deduction or logic use it to complete the task. For example, a student needs to decide which foreign language course to choose – the cheapest, the fastest, or the most innovative – for a teacher-given goal and within given constraints.

*Opinion-gap activity* is used to identify personal preferences or exchange views on a specific issue. There is no right or wrong answer for this type of assignment. For example, you give students a story with missing words – different options will only change the meaning of the story, but not the correctness of the answer.

Advantages of the approach:

1. It stimulates natural language use, spontaneous speech and provides the student with realistic scenarios in which to use their knowledge.
2. It strengthens motivation – a communicative task gives the student a real need for communication, which maximizes the accumulation of knowledge.
3. The approach centres the lesson on the students and gives them independence in the lesson – the students choose the vocabulary and structures that help to achieve the goal. The teacher's role is to be a guide during the assignment, which allows students to feel independent.

4. TBLT teaches through actions and interaction – being involved in solving a communicative situation helps students to immerse themselves in the process of learning a language deeper than learning about something.

Unlike PPP, students are free to choose the vocabulary they will use. At all stages, they focus on developing all language resources, not just new ones.

The natural context is formed from the language experience of the learners, which is personal and relevant to them. In the case of PPP, it is necessary to create context to practice new vocabulary, which in turn may sound unnatural.

Students gain a more varied language experience with the TBLT approach. The situations used in TBLT are close to real life, and, accordingly, the studied vocabulary is more related to the needs of students than to what the textbook or teacher dictates to them. It is a communicative approach that is why students spend most of their time communicating, while PPP is built around the teacher. TBLT brings variety to the class and motivates students.

Disadvantages:

1. The unpredictability of the lesson. It is difficult to plan such a lesson at 100%, to take into account all the necessary vocabulary and structures that students will use during the assignment.

2. Time consuming. Sometimes the task may take longer than expected. The teacher needs to be flexible and willing to spend more time or adjust the assignment to meet the time limit.

3. TBLT requires a high level of creativity and initiative. Moreover there is also a risk for learners to achieve fluency at the expense of accuracy.

So, who is this approach suitable for? It is useful if your students are at least at level A2+ because the method assumes that students already have a certain stock of grammar and vocabulary on the topic, therefore it is important to understand how students are already ready to use the language consciously and perform tasks with its help. We would recommend implementing the method from the A2+ level.

The TBLT approach will be also suitable if the curriculum is more or less free. If you have to follow the coursebook every lesson, it will most likely be difficult to

implement TBLT lessons and assignments, since they often have non-fixed timing. However, you can always use spiking or a vocabulary lesson for these purposes.

In TBLT assignments, the emphasis is always on spontaneity, not accuracy. Here it is important for the teacher to “not notice” mistakes during the assignment; you can take notes, give feedback later, but do not disturb students’ work with corrections. Task-based language teaching shifts the focus from the mechanical repetition of learned language units to the conscious use of the language.

Just as with the TBLT methodology, virtually every teacher has their own personal approach to working with PBL. What is PBL?

The PBL (Problem-Based Learning) technique raises the student’s focus to a higher level. In many ways, PBL is similar to TBLT, but it is even more ambitious. While TBLT focuses on each lesson separately, PBL often focuses on the entire course or academic year.

The PBL (Problem-Based Learning) approach is considered as a successful innovative teaching method, which is aimed at the student’s independent work. In this method, the emphasis of teaching shifts from the teacher to the student. So now the student takes a more active role, trying to solve the set practical problem. This approach teaches the student to broader and deeper comprehend everything said by the teacher during lectures and what is written in textbooks.

Teachers use PBL as a basis for their work throughout the year, while others give it a certain amount of time along with the curriculum. Others use PBL only for selected projects in short or intensive courses. Some teachers base all their curricula on this method if they are given a free hand at private schools. There are four main elements of project-based language teaching that are used in a variety of activities, lessons and courses:

1. The main topic which unites all tasks and leads the entire project to a specific goal.
2. Access to additional information (the Internet made the work on this part of the project much easier), collection, analysis and use of the necessary material.

3. Plenty of opportunities for exchange of ideas, collaboration and communication. Interaction with other learners is fundamental to PBL.

4. The final product often using new technologies that we have access to today is produced in the form of posters, presentations, reports, videos, web pages, blogs, etc.

The roles of teacher and student in PBL and TBLT are very similar. Students are given the freedom to approach problems and tasks in the lesson and exchange information with each other. The teacher's role is to monitor and assist, lay the foundation for communication, provide access to information, correct blunders, and enable students to complete their goal and get the final product. As in TBLT, the teacher controls the interaction between students, but does not interrupt it.

The TBL approach to learning a foreign language at a university has a number of notable advantages. Unlike the PPP approach, when completing communication tasks, students are free from language control by the teacher. At all stages of training, in order to fulfill the communicative task facing them, students use various linguistic means to convey their thoughts in a foreign language, and do not work out just one pre-selected construction. The natural context of communicative interaction is developed taking into account the experience of communication in a foreign language of students, their level of proficiency in a foreign language, as well as taking into account their interests and topics relevant for discussion. Using the PPP method, it is necessary to think up a context in which this or that language structure will be presented, and sometimes the chosen situation may be unnatural for real communication. With the TBL approach, students have the opportunity to practice a much larger number of lexical phrases, speech patterns and language forms. The studied language means are selected based on the needs of students, and not on the basis of a decision made in advance by the teacher or tasks proposed in the textbook.

The use of this method seems to be possible for any branch of science. It is especially important to actively introduce this method into the curriculum of Ukrainian universities. However, it should be noted that for the greatest efficiency of this method, it is necessary to organize the educational process properly. The use of

this method assumes that certain changes will be made to the plan of classes, lectures and seminars, as well as to the methodology for assessing knowledge in order to maximize the benefits of PBL.

While the advantages and disadvantages of PBL and TBLT are almost the same, a significant advantage of project-based language learning is the motivating element, especially for younger learners. The projects simulate real life in the classroom, for example, instead of learning how plants grow (with all the terminology), you actually grow them and watch the process in real time. American theorist John Dewey wrote: "Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself." [5] Project work allows "life itself" to be part of the classroom and provides hundreds of different learning opportunities. Besides the entertainment element, project work includes elements of real life in communicative situations (analysing, solving, editing, rejecting, organizing, delegating...) and often contains interdisciplinary skills that can be borrowed from other sciences, subjects, etc. In general, it promotes the development of a higher level of thinking compared to the standard study of words and rules.

**Conclusion.** Both approaches described are primarily focused on achieving real goals, and then on using the language that is necessary to achieve these goals. Both of them use language as a tool for obtaining a specific result, and not just as a limited set of sounds for learning grammar and vocabulary. They provide many opportunities for communication in an authentic setting and provide the student with the freedom to use language aids so that he can make sense of what he has learned and what more needs to be learned. Most educators typically use a wide variety of combinations of TBLT, PBL, and traditional methods such as PPP. In our opinion, the main thing is to use what is best for each specific group of students with whom we work.

It should also be noted that the reality of teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university is such that the use of the TBLT approach in groups with a low level of foreign language proficiency (A2) is rather difficult. As pedagogical practice shows, students in such groups are characterized by a relatively small vocabulary and a low level of communication skills formation. [6] In such cases, you cannot do



without the traditional PPP method, which allows to practice and fix the necessary speech patterns. In such situations, it is possible to use only elements of the TBLT approach at the last stage of training.

When choosing approaches and methods of teaching, it is necessary to take into account the individual and personal characteristics of students and the level of proficiency in a foreign language by the group as a whole. In our opinion, the optimal is the combined use of various approaches to the study of a foreign language, each of which will complement and compensate for each other's shortcomings, and thus the maximum efficiency of teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university can be achieved.

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