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The Task-Based Approach in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Students of Non-Linguistic Specialties

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Abstract. *The article investigates the application of task-based learning (TBL) in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to non-linguistic students, examining the key stages of planning and conducting practical classes within the TBL framework. It also highlights the main advantages and benefits alongside with possible challenges in implementation of task-based language learning.*

The purpose of the study is to analyze the key features, stages, and principles of task-based language learning and to identify its benefits and challenges in teaching English to non-linguistic students.

The research methods include analysis, generalization, and synthesis of scientific and pedagogical literature in order to determine the current state of the problem, and to formulate conclusions based on the research findings.

Results. *The article analyzes the effectiveness of task-based approach as a communicative method that enhances students' foreign language communicative competence and promotes interactive learning. The study concludes that the active implementation of TBL in practical English classes fosters engagement in meaningful authentic tasks, increases students' motivation for autonomous communication, and*



promotes foreign language acquisition. Furthermore, the article analyzes such key principle of task-based language learning as setting clear objectives, providing an appropriate level of task difficulty, taking into account students' level of communicative competence, clarifying students' roles and desired learning outcomes, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, ensuring students' interaction in meaningful communication, using multimedia tools, and providing content-focused feedback. Practical implementation of TBL in teaching EFL follows three stages: pre-task, during-task, and post-task phases. Additionally, the article offers recommendations for successful use of TBL in teaching EFL to non-linguistic students, such as considering students' linguistic proficiency level, clarifying task purposes, selecting engaging topics, providing constructive feedback, using authentic materials, gradually increasing task complexity, ensuring task repetition, and adopting the teacher's role as a facilitator and advisor.

Key words: *task-based learning, teaching English, innovative pedagogical methods, communicative approach, linguistic competence, students of non-linguistic specialties.*

Метод навчання на основі завдань у викладанні англійської мови студентам нелінгвістичних спеціальностей

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Анотація. *У статті досліджується метод навчання на основі завдань у викладанні англійської мови як іноземної для студентів нелінгвістичних спеціальностей. Автор аналізує ключові етапи планування та проведення*



практичних занять у рамках підходу. Також висвітлюються основні переваги, позитивні аспекти й можливі труднощі впровадження навчання на основі завдань в процесі іншомовної освіти.

Мета дослідження полягає в аналізі ключових особливостей, етапів та принципів навчання на основі завдань, а також у визначенні його переваг та викликів у викладанні англійської мови студентам нелінгвістичних спеціальностей.

Методи дослідження включають аналіз, узагальнення та синтез наукової та педагогічної літератури з метою визначення сучасного стану проблеми та формулювання висновків на основі отриманих результатів.

Результати. У статті аналізується ефективність підходу навчання на основі завдань як комунікативного методу, що підвищує іншомовну комунікативну компетентність студентів та сприяє інтерактивному навчанню. У дослідженні зазначається, що активне впровадження підходу *task-based learning* на практичних заняттях з англійської мови сприяє залученню студентів до виконання автентичних завдань, підвищує мотивацію до самостійного спілкування та стимулює оволодіння іноземною мовою. Крім того, у статті аналізуються ключові принципи навчання на основі завдань, такі як: постановка чітких цілей, забезпечення відповідного рівня складності завдань, врахування рівня комунікативної компетенції студентів, уточнення ролей та очікуваних результатів, створення безпечного та комфортного освітнього середовища, забезпечення взаємодії студентів під час іншомовного спілкування, використання мультимедійних засобів, надання зворотного зв'язку, орієнтованого на зміст. Практичне впровадження *task-based learning* у викладанні англійської мови проходить три етапи: підготовчий, виконання завдання та етап після виконання завдання.

У статті викладено рекомендації для успішного застосування *task-based learning* у викладанні англійської мови студентам нелінгвістичних



спеціальностей, зокрема: врахування рівня комунікативної компетентності студентів, формулювання цілей завдань, вибір цікавих тем, надання конструктивного зворотного зв'язку, використання автентичних матеріалів, поступове ускладнення завдань, забезпечення повторення завдань. Під час впровадження методу навчання на основі завдань центральна роль відведена студентам, які активно залучені до обговорення під час вирішення завдань, а викладач виконує роль консультанта та фасилітатора.

***Ключові слова:** навчання на основі завдань, викладання англійської мови, інноваційні педагогічні методи, комунікативний підхід, комунікативна компетентність, студенти нелінгвістичних спеціальностей.*

Problem statement. Education worldwide in the 21st century faces various challenges due to rapid technological advancement, globalization, and the growing demand for the development of new skills and competences in the digital age, making innovative pedagogical approaches crucial for ensuring effective learning. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) increasingly emphasizes the implementation of active learning methodologies aimed at fostering communicative competence, critical thinking skills, creativity, students' engagement, and collaboration.

Traditional methods, particularly in EFL teaching, where the central role is taken by the teacher, often fail to meet modern educational needs. Thus, researchers underline the necessity to implement innovative pedagogical approaches that are learner-centered and focused on students' educational needs. Therefore, the implementation of task-based learning in foreign language instruction is intended to promote learners' active use of language to address real-world problems and develop communicative competence.

Task-based language teaching is a learner-centered approach in teaching a foreign language for communication. Moreover, it is based on the analysis of real-world tasks, active students' engagement, with the focus on the authentic language use and taking



into account the learners' needs. In addition, task-based language teaching gives opportunities to use a foreign language in a natural context, build confidence and fluency in the target language. Furthermore, task-based activities create meaningful contexts that support and enhance language learning.

Unlike traditional methods in teaching EFL, the task-based approach is a communicative approach in which learners are highly motivated spending most of their time interacting, that makes the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful. Therefore, in scientific research task-based learning is considered as one of the effective means of developing communicative competence, foreign language fluency, motivation, and confidence in using English.

The analysis of recent research and publications. In recent research task-based learning is considered as an innovative approach that has evolved from the communicative approach [12] and, therefore, attracted much attention by researchers and foreign language teachers worldwide. Thus, Van den Branden analyzed general principles of the task-based approach, various definitions of the term “task” from the language learning perspective and its key features, assessment of students’ outcomes in accomplishing target tasks in the process of second language acquisition [13].

Domestic researchers have explored learning through communicative tasks provided by the task-based approach, which gives students the opportunity to use language more naturally and consciously [1; 11]. Thus, M. Vorobel investigated key stages, types of tasks, lessons planning in the frame of task-based learning, benefits and challenges of its implementation in the process of foreign language teaching. The author considered task-based learning technology to be one the most effective communicative methods ensuring interactive communication and developing students' speaking skills in learning English [1]. S. Riabovol analyzed the main distinctive features, functions, advantages, and disadvantages of task-based learning. Special attention was paid to the key task-based learning principles to foster an interactive and motivating learning environment that promotes student achievement [11].



Foreign scholars have investigated the key dimensions that distinguish various task types from the learner's perspective, with particular emphasis on the level of learner engagement and the extent to which attention is directed toward form or meaning [10]. N. Anderson and N. McCutcheon, in their turn, have designed a number of practical activities of task-based learning. The latter is viewed as a student-centered educational approach, that emphasizes students' successful completion of communicative tasks. The authors analyzed key characteristics of tasks in foreign language acquisition such as purposefulness, real communication, learner-centered character, as well as the role of task repetition, pre-task, on-task and post-task micro strategies and tools. Crucial principles of task-based learning are also presented, including meaning priority, active student engagement and possibility to express their own opinions and solutions, linguistic fluency and accuracy, social and authentic nature of tasks, interaction and collaboration among students, and content feedback [2].

L. Bhandar claims that despite positive attitude towards task-based learning in teaching EFL, the foreign language teachers are not sufficiently aware of the methods of applying this approach in educational process [3]. The researcher emphasizes the learner-centered nature of task-based learning, where the students are in the center of all the educational aspects, from planning to assessment and evaluation [3]. The teacher performs the role of a facilitator, adviser, monitor without taking a predominant position at the lesson, engaging students in communicative tasks for speaking, discussing, negotiating, and interacting by means of meaningful communication. The author also presents the definition of a language task and its specific features, including purposefulness, real-life nature aimed to learning a foreign language collaboratively and creatively [3, p.2]. Peculiar components of language tasks and their types are also analyzed. Special attention is paid to problem-solving tasks, jigsaws, decision-making tasks, information-gap tasks and opinion exchange tasks. The learner's role is considered to be crucial in task-based learning and comprises such activities as completing the task properly, group discussion and active team participation,



monitoring, asking for clarification, consulting other learners, risk-taking, and innovation [3, p. 3]. Teachers' attitude and specific strategies for task-based learning implementation in teaching EFL, as well as its advantages are discussed in the article [3].

The comparison of traditional teaching model and innovative teaching methods, including task-based learning, has been explored by foreign researchers [4; 7]. The peculiarities of modern higher education paradigm are discussed with the emphasis on its problem-centered nature and on internally motivated adult learners who are ready to integrate into the working environment and solve real-life problems [4]. Moreover, the scholars underlined that traditional teaching methods focused on transmitting and memorizing information have been reconsidered and replaced by approaches based on collaboration and dialogue between students and teachers. In modern pedagogy, students are no longer passive recipients of information, but active and co-responsible participants of the learning process, involved into independent knowledge-seeking, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving [4]. The authors analyzed such innovative pedagogical methods as group work, cooperative and collaborative work, case study, problem-based learning, project work, role-playing method, blended learning and others. Potential obstacles and tools for practical implementation of innovative teaching methods have also been presented in the research [4]. R. Ellis highlighted key features of task-based pedagogy, its phases and options with the focus on various the various roles students assume from requesting and providing information, expressing agreement and disagreement, to presenting and negotiating their own ideas [7, p. 88].

M. East conducted research on task-based language teaching, analyzing the obstacles arising in the implementation of theory in practice, particularly the balance between focusing on meaning and form, and defining the term "task" from both operational and conceptual perspectives. However, despite the challenges that may occur in task-based teaching, the author underlined the advantages of task-based



approach in teaching EFL which have been successfully implemented, such as students' involvement in meaningful, authentic interactive tasks aimed at fostering linguistic fluency and language proficiency, solving real-life issues, creating a supportive learning environment in which students are encouraged to generate and express their own ideas [6].

L.González Humanez and N. Arias highlighted communicative task-based learning activities and key phases, namely pre-task, during-task, and post-task, to develop learners' oral interaction skills. Special attention is paid to various elements that enable students to communicate new meanings, including body language, isolated words, unstructured sentences, or requests for assistance from the teacher or peers [8]. Specific purposes of task-based language learning, advantages and drawbacks of the method, the roles of teachers and students, and assessment aspects have been explored by N. Ha, N. Loc and T. Tuyen. They emphasized beneficial nature of the task-based approach and presented useful tips for its successful implementation [9].

Identification of previously unresolved aspects of the general problem.

Despite numerous scientific studies conducted within the frame of task-based learning, the investigation of task-based language learning among non-linguistic students has not been fully highlighted in the scientific literature.

Thus, task-based learning is grounded in a solid theoretical foundation; however, it remains a relatively new concept for many English teachers, particularly in the context of teaching EFL to non-linguistic students. Consequently, foreign language instructors are continuously seeking innovative and effective methods that enable them to engage students within limited classroom time, stimulate learners' creativity, motivation, and active participation, and thereby develop students' linguistic competence effectively. This aspiration to modernize foreign language instruction encourages educators to explore and further refine contemporary teaching technologies.



The key principles, benefits, and potential challenges of implementing the task-based approach in teaching EFL to non-philological students have been insufficiently explored.

The purpose of the article is to analyze key features, principles of task-based language learning and identify the advantages and challenges of its implementation in teaching English to students of non-linguistic specialties.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were identified and carried out:

- to analyze the theoretical and methodological principles of utilizing the task-based approach in teaching a foreign language to non-linguistic students;
- to determine the didactic potential of task-based language learning in teaching EFL for the development of foreign language communicative competence;
- to identify the benefits and potential challenges that may arise in the process of implementing the task-based approach;
- to define the term “task” from the perspective of teaching a foreign language to students of non-linguistic specialties;
- to determine the key principles of task-based language learning that ensure its successful implementation in teaching a foreign language to students of non-philological specialties.

Research Results. In scientific discourse, *task-based learning* is defined as a pedagogical approach that developed within the framework of communicative language teaching and offers alternative ways of presenting language material. The teacher does not determine in advance which constructions will be studied. The lesson is based on the task completion, offering significantly more opportunities for authentic language use [1, p. 351]. Moreover, task-based teaching encourages participants to acquire a language indirectly through meaningful communication rather than through explicit study. Therefore, the primary aim of the task-based approach is to provide opportunities for language acquisition and the development of skills through students' engagement in collaborative learning [7]. Being a learner-centered approach, task-



based language learning is founded on the use of tasks in foreign language acquisition [6]. M. East emphasizes that through interactive task engagement, learners integrate key components of language learning, including attention to the meaning, form, and cognitive processing. This approach is therefore considered more effective in promoting second language acquisition than traditional teaching methods, which focus on grammatical explanation followed by controlled grammar practice [6]. Within the framework of task-based language learning, students develop their communicative competence through meaningful task engagement. L. P. Bhandari underlines that carefully designed tasks, which take into account students' individual characteristics and their proficiency levels, create a more natural and supportive learning environment that fosters peer interaction. By participating in tasks connected to real-life issues, students develop both subject knowledge and communication skills [3, p. 4]. S. Riabovol defines task-based learning as an effective pedagogical method that emphasizes the meaningful use of a foreign language over the rote memorization of language units [11].

Taking into consideration the scientific research analyzed above, task-based learning can be defined as a learner-centered communicative approach that promotes language acquisition through meaningful, real-world tasks, emphasizing communication rather than explicit grammar instruction. It encourages students to use a foreign language purposefully to achieve specific learning outcomes, such as solving problems, completing authentic tasks, and participating in collaborative discussions with peers. The approach also fosters linguistic fluency and students' confidence, making the learning process more engaging, meaningful, and dynamic.

In this approach, language functions not as an exercise but as a tool for completing a task and for achieving a goal, similar to real communication where language serves as a means of communication [1, p.352]. Thus, in task-based learning, the task occupies a central role in classroom activities, prompting learners to actively engage their thinking while acquiring a foreign language [3, p. 2]. Moreover, the development of



creative thinking skills in future specialists is essential for foreign language acquisition [5]. Therefore, task-based learning facilitates students' active engagement in EFL instruction, thereby promoting the development of linguistic competence, creative thinking, and learner motivation.

L. Bhandari determines *a language task* as a meaningful piece of learners' activity designed by the teacher to engage students in interacting, understanding, and producing learning outcomes in a foreign language. Tasks serve as the core elements of task-based language teaching [3, p. 2]. M. East underlines the complexity in defining the term "task" that lies in theoretical and conceptual approaches [6]. The first approach emphasizes meaning rather than grammar, encouraging learners to use their own linguistic resources to achieve specific task outcomes, with language functioning as a tool for communication rather than mere practice. The author notes that excessive teacher intervention can hinder task completion. The conceptual approach emphasizes teachers' prior experience in understanding the term "task", that is often mixed up with other structured communicative activities [6]. Furthermore, language tasks should be purposeful and designed to engage learners in authentic communicative interaction [2].

The researchers emphasize the necessity of adhering to *the key principles of task-based language learning* for its successful implementation. Thus, M. East outlines such principles as providing opportunities for students' spoken interaction and active listening, promoting collaboration in pairs and group work, incorporating individual and whole-class activities, and encouraging meaningful, authentic communication and interactive negotiation among participants. Furthermore, the teacher acts as a facilitator and advisor, providing essential feedback during task fulfillment [6]. R. Ellis emphasizes such crucial principles of task-based learning as ensuring an appropriate level of task difficulty, setting clear objectives for each task-based lesson, fostering a positive attitude toward task completion, clarifying students' roles and options, ensuring that students assume both initiating and responsive roles in classroom interaction, motivating students, inspiring them to take risks, focusing primarily on



meaning while also providing opportunities to focus on form during task performance, and offering assessment alongside opportunities for self-evaluation [7, p. 98].

S. Riabovol also underlines such principles as promoting students' active learning, ensuring the gradual development of linguistic abilities, creating a safe and comfortable learning environment, utilizing multimedia tools, engaging students in meaningful communication, integrating reflection, and providing indirect feedback [11]. N. Anderson and N. McCutcheon underline the learner-centered nature of the task-based approach, emphasizing meaning; the principle that accuracy emerges through fluency; the social and physical aspects of tasks; authentic communication; and the value of task repetition [2].

In scientific studies, researchers outline the distinct stages of task-based language learning as follows:

1) Pre-task phase: involves setting up the activity and defining the task outcome, planning time, performing a similar task and presenting a model, strategic planning, and summarizing;

2) During-task phase: characterized by students' active engagement in task completion, comprising three performance options: setting time limits, providing access to input data, and including a surprise element (creative activity);

3) Post-task phase: involves task repetition, reflection, focus on form, and error analysis [7].

N. Anderson and N. McCutcheon, in their turn, provide the following task structure:

1) Pre-task micro strategies, which may include preparation (discussing the general topic, taking notes, brainstorming), setting the task objective and expected outcomes, which may involve speaking, listening, evaluating, solving, reporting, identifying, voting, and enquiring;

2) On-task micro strategies, which comprise task facilitation, such as encouraging students to engage in meaningful communication with minimal teacher intervention;



3) Post-task micro strategies, which include provision of content feedback, focus on form, and task repetition [2].

S. Riabovol distinguishes a preparatory stage, which involves setting a goal, defining learners' roles and expected outcomes; a task performance stage, encompassing task completion, preparation for reporting results, and the actual reporting; and a language stage, focused on the analysis of the linguistic means used, during which the teacher can employ both implicit and explicit techniques [11]. M. Sholeh emphasizes the following stages: the pre-task stage, involving presentation of the topic and guidance; the task stage, encompassing task fulfillment in pairs or groups; planning; reporting, which promotes reflection; analysis; and practice, consisting of further language activities designed to enhance students' self-confidence and provide constructive language feedback [12, p.91]. Among the most well-known forms of work in pairs and groups are the following ones: inside/outside circles; brainstorming; jigsaw reading; think-pair-share; pair-interviews and others [1, p. 354].

Numerous benefits of task-based language learning have been identified in the scientific literature. Thus, the key advantages of implementing a task-based approach in teaching English to students of non-linguistic specialties include:

1) Task-based learning promotes meaningful communication, students' active engagement in learning EFL, develops learners' creative and problem-solving abilities, fosters group work and leadership skills, and provides students with practical skills and experience [11, p. 86];

2) The learner-centered nature of the task-based approach enables non-linguistic students to become active participants in knowledge acquisition, promotes real-world language use, and emphasizes meaning over form [12];

3) The task-based approach in teaching EFL instruction facilitates achievement of students' learning outcomes, while equipping them with practical strategies and practical skills necessary for solving real-life problems [9, p. 6];



4) Students develop confidence in completing learning tasks as they are given opportunities to engage in various activities, and to achieve success in learning a foreign language [9, p. 6];

5) Task-based language learning is particularly effective in promoting meaningful and authentic oral communication [8];

6) Students become language users, relying on their linguistic resources in addition to their general cognitive abilities [13, p. 9];

7) Learners use various language means to express their ideas in a foreign language, and do not practice only one pre-selected construction [1, p. 354];

8) Students' needs as well as their experience and levels of proficiency are taken into account, increasing learners' motivation in learning English [1].

9) Compared with traditional teaching methods, which focus on grammar-translation activities, task-based learning adopts a student-centered approach in which learners actively participate in meaningful interaction, express their ideas freely, engage in discussion, and receive content focused feedback [6; 7];

10) In comparison with traditional teacher-centered methods, where the teacher controls topic-development and students fulfill a narrow range of language functions, the task-based approach encourages students to take on both initiating and responding roles, enabling them to perform a broad range of language functions (asking for and providing information, expressing agreement and disagreement) [7, p. 88].

Nonetheless, task-based language learning presents several disadvantages and challenges. It can be time-consuming, as clarifying the task during the pre-task stage reduces the teacher's time for language use [12, p. 93]. It is rather difficult to implement the task-based approach in groups with low levels of English proficiency [1, p. 355]. Students may have insufficient classroom time to complete meaningful tasks. Furthermore, challenges include difficulties in objective assessment, unequal participation in group work, and the need for extensive teacher preparation and carefully designed materials.



Researchers highlight the following recommendations for successful implementation of task-based learning in teaching EFL to non-linguistic students: taking into account students' level of English proficiency; paying attention to task repetition, as it provides learners with additional opportunities to practice a foreign language; ensuring systematic task completion; and clarifying task purposes for both teachers and students [9]. Moreover, it is considered essential to select engaging discussion topics that motivate students and stimulate their intrinsic motivation for communication [1].

Furthermore, in task-based teaching, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator. It is important to engage students in meaningful communication, provide opportunities for them to take risks and express their own ideas and solutions, offer constructive feedback on both language use and task performance, integrate authentic materials and real-life contexts to enhance task relevance, and ensure a gradual increase in task complexity.

Conclusions. The aim of teaching English in higher education is to develop students' communicative competence, enabling them to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities to solve communicative tasks in real-life. Task-based language learning is one of the effective methods for enhancing students' linguistic proficiency through meaningful task completion and active learner engagement.

Moreover, students of non-linguistic specialties integrate their professional expertise with language resources to address real-world problems. As a learner-centered approach, task-based learning fosters collaborative engagement, thereby making foreign language acquisition more meaningful and effective. Furthermore, the task-based approach promotes the active use of a broad linguistic repertoire.

The task-based approach ensures meaningful communication, develops learners' confidence, and motivates them to take risks. However, certain aspects should be taken into account, including students' levels of communicative competence, clear formulation of goals and learning outcomes, definition of students' roles in each task,



and provision of assessment and self-evaluation procedures. In this approach, the teacher acts as an advisor, assisting students with task completion and providing essential feedback.

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