BRIDGING COGNITIVE LOAD AND AFFECTIVE VARIABLES: THE EFFICACY OF TBLT IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Nasimova Muattar Khasanovna
PhD Students of Samarkand State University
named after Sharof Rashidov
Uzbekistan
nasimovamuattar@gmail.com

Abstract. *This article analyzes the transition from traditional grammatical approaches to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). In this approach, the 'task' is viewed as the core unit, and language acquisition is highlighted through meaningful communication based on the interaction and output hypotheses. Furthermore, the role of task repetition and planning in reducing cognitive load and increasing oral fluency is demonstrated, along with how TBLT strengthens motivation by lowering the affective filter. Consequently, it is confirmed that TBLT effectively develops both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.*

Keywords: *TBLT, cognitive load, affective filter, task repetition, oral fluency, communicative competence.*

The historical development of language teaching methodology is characterized by a gradual transition from traditional approaches focused on linguistic forms to modern paradigms based on meaning and real communication. J.R. Kantor's functional approach holds particular significance as one of the important theoretical foundations of this evolutionary process (Kantor, 1936). He interprets grammar not as a system of static rules, but as a 'psychological process' representing the speaker's adaptation to a specific communicative situation."

Although the PPP (Presentation–Practice–Production) model, which was widely used in the second half of the 20th century, developed students' ability to analyze grammatical structures and apply them under controlled conditions, this approach did not sufficiently prepare them to conduct effective speech activity in real communicative situations (Panduwangi, 2021). As a result, a significant imbalance emerged between the language units acquired in the classroom environment and their application in real life. It was precisely this discrepancy that prompted methodologists to develop new, communicatively oriented approaches to language teaching.

The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) paradigm, formed on this basis, interprets language not as an object of study, but as a means of activity acquired during the performance of specific communicative tasks (Kantor, 1936). In this approach, the "task"

appears as the core didactic unit, through which natural and goal-oriented communication among learners is ensured. Consequently, TBLT created a significant conceptual turning point in the field of linguodidactics, serving to reinterpret language teaching as an integrative system directed toward forming real communicative competence rather than formal knowledge (Ellis, 2003)

Theoretical Foundations: Interaction, Output, and Cognitive Hypotheses

The theoretical foundation of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach is based on a number of fundamental hypotheses that are interconnected and complementary. These hypotheses serve to explain the language acquisition process from communicative, psycholinguistic, and cognitive perspectives. First, according to the 'Interaction Hypothesis' put forward by M. Long, the negotiation of meaning that occurs during communication lies at the center of the language learning process. In this process, interlocutors adapt linguistic means to resolve mutual misunderstandings, which creates opportunities for the learner to perceive language units more deeply and apply them actively (Long, 1996). At the same time, the fact that language acquisition is not limited solely to receiving incoming information (input) was further clarified through the 'Output Hypothesis' established by Swain (1985). According to this hypothesis, a learner only begins to realize their linguistic gaps and shortcomings when forced to express their thoughts during speech activity. This leads to the conscious cognitive processing of language material and the reinforcement of grammatical and lexical units.

In order to explain these theoretical approaches more systematically, the 'Cognition Hypothesis' developed by P. Robinson holds special importance. According to this hypothesis, task complexity is an important factor in managing a learner's attentional resources. As task demands are increased step-by-step, learners strive to use more complex linguistic structures; as a result, oral fluency and accuracy develop simultaneously (Robinson, 2001). Thus, TBLT manifests not only as a methodology based on communicative activity but as a scientifically grounded system that comprehensively mobilizes human cognitive, psychological, and interactive potential during the language acquisition process.

Methodological Characteristics of the Task and Cognitive Processes

The concept of the "task," which is the central element of the TBLT methodology, differs radically from traditional exercises in its didactic and functional characteristics. Above all, during the task performance process, meaning takes priority over linguistic form (primacy of meaning), and it must be directed toward a specific communicative outcome (Ellis, 2003). Furthermore, the connection of the task to a real-life context and and the existence of a need for information exchange (communicative gap) appear as important factors ensuring its authenticity (Panduwangi, 2021).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, TBLT is organized taking into account the capabilities and limitations of the human cognitive system, particularly working memory. According to Levelt's (1989) model of speech production, the processes of formulating meaning and expressing it grammatically occur simultaneously during speech activity, which creates a significant cognitive load for the learner. To effectively manage this load, the "pre-task planning" stage holds an important place in TBLT methodology. Scientific research shows that planning time allocated before task performance allows students to structurally organize their speech in advance, reduces cognitive pressure, and consequently serves to create richer, logically consistent, and grammatically accurate speech (Bakhtiary 2021). In addition, the "task repetition" strategy plays an important role in optimizing speech processes. According to this approach, when a student performs a task again, they focus primarily on meaning during the first attempt, while in subsequent stages; they begin to pay more attention to linguistic form, precision, and correctness. As a result, speech activity gradually becomes automated, and all components of communicative competence develop consistently (Bygate, 2001).

Integration of Affective Factors and Krashen's "Affektiv Filtr" Hypothesis

The effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is directly related not only to cognitive factors but also to affective variables. The significance of psychological states in the language acquisition process is explained through the 'Affective Filter' hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985). According to this hypothesis, high levels of anxiety, low motivation, and a lack of self-confidence create a "psychological barrier" in the learner's mind, which slows down or limits the process of effective language acquisition. In a TBLT environment, however, the focus of the learning activity is shifted from minimizing grammatical errors toward performing a specific task and achieving a communicative outcome. As a result, students engage in free communication without the fear of making mistakes, which leads to a significant decrease in the level of the affective filter (Panduwangi, 2021). TBLT facilitates acquisition by replacing the anxiety of grammatical perfection with the goal of task completion, thereby lowering the affective filter and fostering a secure environment for free communication..

Technology-Mediated TBLT and Psychological Comfort

The integration of digital tools into the TBLT framework has revolutionized the management of the 'Affective Filter.' Unlike traditional face-to-face classrooms, where the pressure of immediate, public performance can paralyze learners—particularly those with high levels of foreign language anxiety—technology-mediated environments offer a 'buffer zone' (Zheng, 2021).

Anonymity and Reduced Social Pressure: Digital platforms, such as asynchronous forums or avatar-based virtual environments, allow students to experiment with language without the immediate "social gaze" of their peers. For introverted learners, this reduces

the fear of negative evaluation, which is a primary component of Krashen's affective filter. By providing a sense of anonymity or a semi-private space for task completion, TMTBLT encourages these students to produce more "pushed output" than they would in a physical classroom.

Multimodal Support for Extroverts: Conversely, for extroverted learners, multimedia tasks (such as video blogging or interactive digital simulations) provide the high-engagement, high-stimulus environment they need to maintain intrinsic motivation. The ability to use emojis, voice recordings, and collaborative digital whiteboards makes the "task" feel less like an academic exercise and more like a real-world social interaction.

Pacing and Autonomy: Technology allows for learner-paced task engagement. When students can pause a video prompt, look up a word in a digital dictionary, or re-record a voice message before submitting it, their sense of self-efficacy (confidence in their ability to succeed) increases. This sense of control is crucial in lowering anxiety and ensuring that the cognitive load remains manageable, thereby facilitating a more efficient path to oral and written speech competence. Ultimately, TMTBLT transforms the classroom into a flexible ecosystem where the task is adapted to the learner's psyche, rather than forcing the learner to adapt to a rigid, high-anxiety instructional format.

This article analyzed the scientific basis of the transition from traditional grammar-focused approaches to the TBLT system. In TBLT, the "task" is central, and language is learned through meaningful interaction and active production. The results show that planning and repetition reduce cognitive load and increase fluency, while lowering the affective filter strengthens motivation. Ultimately, TBLT manifests as an effective modern approach that harmoniously develops both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.

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