



## A Case of Reading Teaching on Task-Based Teaching Model in Middle Schools

Liu YongMei

Number 4 Middle School, Baotou, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China

Correspondence: 3083821607@qq.com

**Abstract:** In April 2022, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China officially announced the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition). Since the release of the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2011 Edition), the reform of the English curriculum for compulsory education has made remarkable achievements; at the same time, however, there are also some problems that need to be solved urgently. The new curriculum standards should change the teaching of vocabulary and grammar knowledge as the main content, select learning contents around the comprehensive performance of core literacy, design teaching units as a whole, and plan the blueprint of unit education. According to the students' comprehensive performance and the objectives of the school section, the content should be closely related to the real life, especially the social life and learning life that students are familiar with and meet the characteristics of their physical and mental development. The content selected should reflect the characteristics of the times and social progress, focus on the themes of people and nature. Elements on theme, discourse, language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies should be considered when selecting the teaching content. Ultimately, students are expected to use the knowledge and skills to solve tasks and problems in practice. In terms of middle school English teaching, the author holds that Task-Based Teaching Mode will help teachers to achieve the above goals. Task-Based teaching emphasizes learning by doing, which allows students to interact with teachers, and it also creates a favorable environment for students to learn and internalize. The middle school English teaching goal is to help the students to obtain the basic English knowledge and the ability of using English to communicate through listening, speaking, reading and writing training. As a helpful teaching approach, the Task-Based Teaching Model can be widely used. Based on the English classroom of middle school, this thesis discusses the relationship between Task-Based Teaching Model and the modern English class through analyzing the reading in middle school English class. The paper draws a conclusion that Task-Based Teaching Model is effective in middle school English classroom and it can improve students comprehensive ability to a all-round development level.

**Keywords:** Task, teaching, middle schools, teachers, students

### Introduction

Compared with traditional English teaching, Task-Based language teaching has its unique characteristics. In classroom teaching, many teachers pay more and more attention to the application of Task-Based Language Teaching in English teaching. English teaching can not achieve the purpose of exchanging information, which deviates from the purpose of English teaching. If teachers

want to effectively implement Task-Based language teaching in teaching activities, teachers need to have a full understanding of the meaning and characteristics of Task-Based language teaching, as well as the framework and steps of Task-Based English teaching and the principles of Task-Based language teaching design. The rise of Task-Based language teaching has been recognized by many front-line teachers. One of the main reasons is that the advocates of Task-Based language teaching do not exclude grammar teaching, but pay more attention to and emphasize students'

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application of language knowledge to express meaningful ideas and complete tasks. The Task-Based classroom model focuses students' attention on how to use English as a communication tool to complete the task, rather than just care about whether the sentences they say are correct. The results of task completion provide learners with self-evaluation criteria and make them have a sense of achievement. These goals serve the classroom teaching, and students are the direct beneficiaries. It embodies the idea of "taking students as the main body, taking tasks as the center and taking activities as the way"<sup>[1]</sup>. It is helpful for students to study independently, improve their ability of using language to communicate, and enhance their interest and confidence in learning. It is the concrete embodiment of quality education in English Teaching.

Task-Based language teaching is organized by task. In task performance, learners can develop their cognitive ability fully by learning way of participation, experience, interaction, communication and cooperation. Task-Based teaching is based on specific tasks for learning or motivation to complete the task process as a learning process. A teaching method that shows the achievements of teaching by showing the results of tasks. Achieve the understanding of the topic during the completion of the task. It is a kind of effective foreign language teaching method worth popularizing. In teaching activities, teachers should design specific and operational tasks around specific communication and language projects. Students complete tasks through expressions, communication, negotiation, interpretation, and inquiry in various language activities to achieve learning and master the purpose of the language. The Task-Based teaching method is formed by absorbing the advantages of various previous teaching methods. It is not excluded to other teaching methods.

### **Definition and Concept**

The task is the main content of Task-Based Teaching Model. The generalized task is considered as the various things that are done in daily life, in works and in playing times. But the foreign scholars hold the different views on tasks. They all have different definitions and understanding of tasks. The American linguist David Nunan was the iconic character of Task-Based Teaching Model. One of the definition is defined by Nunan: "the task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than forms."<sup>[2]</sup> . Michael Long was also one of the earlier scholars who studied Task-Based Language Teaching. Long thought: "task is all kinds of things people do or work in daily life. For example, the tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, buying shoes, taking a driving test, filling out a form."<sup>[3]</sup> (Long, 1985). Although the experts are holding the different ideas of task, it also has a common point: "task is involved

in the use of language."<sup>[4]</sup> This paper adopt and summarize the David Nunan's definition of task. According to Nunan's definition, the author also give the understanding about the task. The task is a classroom activity or topic that given before class by teachers and it must be finished in the class. Task based language teaching is a structural teaching method. Its main elements are teaching objectives, information input, activity mode, roles of teachers and students, and teaching environment. Compared with the traditional language teaching, Task-Based language teaching pays more attention to the communication of information, the enrichment of activities and the authenticity<sup>[5]</sup>. The main purpose of English teaching is to communicate in English. Krashen distinguishes two concepts of language learning: learning and acquisition<sup>[6]</sup>. Learning refers to learning a language consciously through teaching, while acquisition refers to mastering a language by unconsciously contacting the language system through communication. Krashen emphasizes that language mastery is mostly the result of using language in communication activities, rather than simply training language skills and learning language knowledge. Krashen believes that students must master language through comprehensible input<sup>[7]</sup>. Task based approach (TBAP) is a kind of teaching method based on the theory of "constructivism". It refers to the determination of language learning tasks according to the communicative needs of real life. Students make plans around this task and complete the tasks through their own efforts, and constantly evaluate their learning in the process.

The Task-Based teaching method takes the specific task as the learning motivation, completes the task in the learning process, and shows the performance of the task to reflect the teaching results. The theoretical basis of Task-Based teaching is "input and interaction". The newly revised "interpretation of English curriculum standards for full-time compulsory education" actively advocates Task-Based teaching method. Under the guidance of teachers, students can learn independently through perception, experience, practice, participation and cooperation, actively use the language they have learned in practice and develop their language ability in language practice.

Task based English teaching is a purposeful activity to do something in English. Meaning comes first. When a learner completes a "task", it is not to show the language itself, not to pay attention to the correctness of the language form, but to how to express their ideas and transmit their ideas.

Task based teaching makes language teaching real and classroom socialized. Its main purpose is to let students not only learn in application, but also learn for the sake of application. Through classroom teaching, students can complete real life, study, work and other tasks in various situations directly through classroom teaching, so as to cultivate students' Comprehensive ability to apply English.

## Literature Review

Task based teaching model is a set of teaching mode which was first put forward and implemented in Bangalore region of India by British education expert Barry POE in 1980s. This teaching mode is a further development of communicative language teaching, which puts language into practice.

The basic concept of language application is transformed into a practical classroom teaching method, which fully embodies the educational concept of student-centered and student-oriented. Task based teaching model has experienced more than 30 years of development in foreign countries. However, the research of Task-Based teaching mode in China is still in the exploratory stage. Professor Wu Xudong, in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, has been the focus of the task oriented teaching mode. In 2011, the Ministry of Education released English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2011 Edition), which clearly advocates the Task-Based teaching approach. Due to the authority and guidance of the curriculum standard, since 2011, researchers engaged in English education and middle school English teachers have set off an upsurge of learning, researching and trying Task-Based language teaching. By combing its development process and research status in China, it is not difficult to find out that Task-Based language teaching has become a hot topic in China, The research of Task-Based teaching mode has experienced three processes: the theoretical introduction of foreign Task-Based teaching mode, the localization of Task-Based teaching mode in China, and the practice of Task-Based teaching mode. On the one hand, many domestic scholars systematically, completely and original introduced the foreign theories of Task-Based language teaching. In 1998, Professor Xia Jimei of Sun Yat University published a paper entitled *The Theoretical Basis And Model Comparison Of Problem-Based Teaching And Task-Based Teaching*<sup>[8]</sup>, which analyzed and introduced the concept of Task-Based foreign language teaching in detail, Liao Xiaoqing's *"Theoretical Basis And Classroom Practice Of Task-Based Teaching"* introduces the theoretical basis, definition, structure and teaching steps of Task-Based teaching method<sup>[9]</sup>; in 2002, Yu Guangan's Task-Based teaching: positioning and thinking first describes the theoretical basis of several aspects of Task-Based teaching, This paper introduces three criteria of Skehan's task complexity analysis (code complexity, cognitive complexity and communication pressure), and the characteristics of task sequencing (systematicness and continuity). Finally, the problems faced by TBLT (authenticity and education of task, standard and weight of task, relevance and feasibility) are put forward, In their Task-Based language teaching, Gong Yafu and Luo Shaoxi introduced the theoretical basis of Task-Based language teaching, the definition of task, the principles and characteristics of Task-Based language teaching, the

relationship between task and teaching objectives, and the relationship between task and behavior evaluation. On the other hand, on the basis of introducing and studying the foreign Task-Based teaching mode, some domestic scholars further explain and analyze the foreign theories from a certain angle.

The theory and practice of real Task-Based English Teaching in middle schools is elaborated in detail in the book *"Theory And Practice Of Real Task-Based English Teaching In Middle Schools"*. "Real Task-Based teaching" is based on the real education, teaching requirements, teaching methods, teaching conditions and other real teaching factors based on the real purpose and real environment of English education in middle schools in China, the real learning mechanism of middle school students in China, and the real teaching factors such as teaching requirements, teaching methods and teaching conditions. Li Zhen put forward the principles of constructing Chinese localization Task-Based language teaching mode and the Chinese localization Task-Based language teaching mode<sup>[10]</sup>: the combination of learning and acquisition, mainly learning; the combination of language knowledge, skills and comprehensive language ability; the combination of students' needs and development; the unity of Task-Based teaching and non Task-Based teaching. Based on the practice of English Teaching in China, Su Zhimin has formed a localized Task-Based teaching model which consists of four stages: task presentation, real learning task, real application task and task review<sup>[11]</sup>. He Jing mainly integrates the advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching and traditional English teaching methods, implements a set of Chinese localization Task-Based teaching mode, and probes into the construction of Chinese localization Task-Based teaching mode from three aspects, namely, theoretical basis, principle and model structure. First of all, some domestic scholars try to combine the Task-Based classroom model proposed by foreign scholars with foreign language teaching at all levels. Ni Wensai puts forward the task driven mode of primary school English teaching<sup>[12]</sup>; Luo Heng puts forward the Task-Based learning model, in which learners internalize knowledge, cultivate emotions, form attitudes and strategies with the help of teachers<sup>[13]</sup>.

## A Case of Reading Teaching in Task-Based Teaching Approach

According to the views of scholar Willis and Skehan and Ellis, Task-Based teaching is generally divided into three stages<sup>[14]</sup>: pre-task, task and review. Thus teachers could use the three stages into reading class in junior high school.

### 1.Pre-reading

The first stage is pre-reading. Pre-reading refers to the fact that teachers should do some preparation before students reading. Before reading, teachers should design some tasks which are concentrated in some background of the theme. And they need to introduce the subject and task to the class.

The purpose is to rouse their original vocabulary that are related with the topic and to help them be familiar with the subject, predict content, stimulate students' interest in learning. In this part, the teachers can design some activities related to the subject, for example: the classification of words and words, the situation of the suspect, using multimedia to carry out some relevant content of the display, and any other activities to arouse the curiosity of students, so as to guide students to use the existing knowledge, do a good job before reading preparation activities.

According to the basic concept of Task-Based teaching, the following will be specific to the "Compulsory education curriculum standard experimental English textbook (New goal)" in Unit 9 in the Reading part of: "Did you know when basketball is invented?" As an example to explore the application of Task-Based teaching in junior high school English reading course. Before reading, the teacher can ask the question at first (warm-up):

1. Please List 8 sports you played in China.
2. How popular is each sport? Rank them 1-8 in the order of popularity.
3. Do you like playing basketball? How much did you know about basketball? Organize students to group discussions so that they can focus their attention quickly and stimulate their interests in the content of the article.

## **2.While-reading**

The second stage is while-reading, which is the main stage of Task-Based teaching after the preparatory work is completed. At this stage, the task is composed of a variety of activities and different activities point to different tasks. According to the teacher's request, the students can finish the task by reading the articles, discussing, exchanging, debating in the form of a pair or a group, and then the students may report the completion of the task in the form of oral report or writing report. Students can use their own thoughts to learn English through the completion of specific tasks. They actively participate in various tasks to achieve "learning by doing" truly.

Firstly, students read quickly and find new words, phrases and difficult sentences that exist in the article. Some students can answer these questions and the teacher also should made a supplementary explanation which will remove the dyslexia. Then students read and understand further so they can master these new words, phrases and difficult sentences. Secondly, students are required to read the text carefully, understand the main idea, and complete the "Mind-map" in 3 A and 3B then answer the following questions :

Who invented basketball?

Why were the Berlin Olympics important for basketball?

What is the aim of basketball?

Name a professional basketball organization in America.

Through these two exercises, it is easier for students to get a clear idea of the content of the article. Tirdly, the teacher

picks up a paragraph of the passage and replaces some of the key words in the passage with a horizontal line to make a ppt. Students fill in the blanks based on the understanding of the content of the article and the mastery of the word. This not only strengthens the students' mastery of the word, but also makes their understanding of the article rise to a new height.

## **3.Post-reading**

The last stage is post-reading which is a reflection stage. This stage is used to reflect on the problems encountered by the students in completing the tasks. After the completion of the reading, the teacher based on the students in the performance of the task, using student self-examination, student mutual check, teacher spot checks and group activities and other forms of collaborative interaction to determine whether the expected reading goal is achieved or not. On this basis, teachers use teaching resources mainly to explain the special structure of the article, language difficulties and understanding of doubtful points. At the same time, students are instructed to use skimming, skipping and reading, so as to understand the essentials of reading articles and improve reading skills such as reasoning and judgment.

A group of four people start the discussion: "What are the advantages and disadvantages of playing basketball?" Students participate in language practice activities in an active atmosphere, while teachers can evaluate students' performance and the results of their reports. The evaluation should take into account the content, organization, structure, integrity, creativity and other factors, and the results of the students should be recorded in the record book. Finally, students are asked to choose an invention after class and do the same research as the text, and then make their findings into a simple "mind-map".

## **The Advantages and Limitations of Task-Based Teaching Method**

### **1.The advantages of Task-Based teaching method**

Firstly, task based teaching method is helpful to promote autonomous learning and arouse students' enthusiasm and creativity. There is no doubt that students are the main body of learning. But the traditional teaching method ignores the student's main body status. Although the teaching reform in recent years has made the majority of educators realize the importance of giving students the dominant position, in most cases, teachers are still the masters of the classroom. Task based teaching has completely changed the teaching mode centered on Teachers' teaching, emphasizing the students' actual needs as the center, and the task reflecting their life experience and cognitive level as the carrier to achieve the goal of language acquisition, so as to give play to the students' autonomy and inquiry in the learning process. Teachers are no longer authoritative teachers, but organizers and promoters of communication activities. Students change from passively accepting knowledge to actively completing

tasks. In this process, they can give full play to their initiative and creativity.

Secondly, create a real language situation. Task based language teaching is a communicative activity in which students use the target language independently. In the situation created by human beings, students can communicate freely, democratically and harmoniously to complete certain language tasks. Task based teaching emphasizes the diversity and authenticity of the situation. The setting of the situation is close to the students' life. According to the students' interests, hobbies, life experience, emotion and ability level, it sets the situation and arranges tasks. It encourages the students to express their real feelings according to the real situation, tell the real life experience, and transfer the real information, so as to make various language skills flexibly reflected in communication. In the process of autonomous, cooperative and creative completion of tasks and communication, teachers and students can form a harmonious and interactive teaching situation, which helps to cultivate students' spirit of unity and cooperation. In a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere, it can promote second language acquisition, stimulate students' potential, and significantly improve students' comprehensive language ability.

Thirdly, form effective language learning strategies. Many students are very unfamiliar with learning strategies, which is mainly due to the fact that traditional foreign language classroom teaching emphasizes knowledge transfer rather than strategy training. However, learning to learn is a requirement for everyone in the era of knowledge economy. Therefore, the important task of teaching should be to teach students to master learning strategies and use them flexibly so as to achieve the goal of autonomous learning. Task based teaching method takes task as the carrier, involving language skills, language knowledge, students' emotional attitude and so on. It focuses on the comprehensive development of audio-visual, speaking, reading, writing and other language skills, and helps students form the ability of comprehensive use of language, the ability of cooperative exploration, the ability of using target language to analyze and solve problems and the ability of innovation. In the process of completing the task, emotional and strategic adjustments should be made to form a positive learning attitude, promote the improvement of language practical ability, and form everyone's unique and effective English learning strategies.

## **2. The limitations of Task-Based teaching method**

Firstly, the limitation of language environment. As mentioned above, providing authentic learning materials and activities for students is the cornerstone of Task-Based teaching theory. Through the activity of completing the task, it provides learners with a real scene similar to real life. Task based teaching advocates providing learners with a series of communicative tasks, requiring learners to use the target language to complete these tasks and learn the language in

the process of completing the tasks. When teachers think about it, teachers find that some of the Task-Based activities mentioned above are not real life tasks in the real sense, but foreign language activities in the classroom. The effect and feasibility of designing all the teaching contents as communicative activities in this simulated environment are questionable. In addition, for language learners at the same level, the complementarity of language communication between them is not great, it is difficult to achieve more and more accurate language input and output, and can not really achieve the task. In most cases, it is an optimistic one-sided assumption that learners can learn language knowledge by completing tasks. If the hypothesis is true, people can learn a foreign language through all kinds of real communication activities after class, but China lacks an ideal language environment for foreign language learning. Obviously, creating a real language environment is subject to many restrictions.

Secondly, students' individual differences. Although the concept of Task-Based teaching is highly praised by people, it is not a panacea. Some people think that as long as a variety of activities are designed, good teaching results can be achieved, without considering the characteristics of learners' psychological development, and ignoring the adaptability of tasks to learners. Although students have the basis to complete the task, the individual differences between students still limit the students' classroom performance and the effect of completing the task. Put aside the group character, as far as individuals are concerned, not all students can complete the corresponding tasks well. To a certain extent, they need teachers to impart a lot of knowledge to solve their doubts. Therefore, it is unfair to adopt Task-Based teaching mode in classroom teaching. Moreover, some students have some inferiority complex. Due to the lack of language environment, they have few opportunities for oral practice, and their oral communication ability is low. They are afraid of making mistakes and will use their mother tongue consciously or unconsciously. The more dependent they are on their mother tongue, the slower their oral communication ability will be improved. The inferiority complex caused by this vicious circle seriously hinders students from actively completing tasks, and may even lead to weariness of learning.

## **Conclusion**

Task based teaching is the development of communicative approach. It emphasizes the students' subjectivity, enhances their practical ability, creativity and comprehensive English application ability. It is an effective way to achieve the goal of curriculum reform. It has achieved good results in teaching. It has become an inevitable trend to advocate this method in today's classroom reform. A large number of activities in the new textbook provide a wide range of implementation of this method. At the same time, when

teachers use Task-Based language teaching in teaching design, teachers should consider everything carefully and follow its principles and three steps. Only in this way can teachers improve the implementation effect of Task-Based Language Teaching in classroom teaching and give full play

to students' initiative and creativity.

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