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TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A FOCUS ON NEGATION

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Abstract. This article explores the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with explicit grammar instruction for teaching negation in English to B1 and B2 level learners. Drawing on Young (2003) and Leech (2006), it analyzes structural and functional aspects of negation and demonstrates a practical TBLT-based lesson design that incorporates pre-task, task, and post-task phases. The approach promotes both grammatical accuracy and communicative fluency, offering implications for EFL classrooms aiming to develop learners' ability to use negation effectively in authentic contexts.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, English Grammar, Negation, B1 Learners, Explicit Instruction;

INTRODUCTION

Grammar instruction has long been a cornerstone of English language teaching, but the question of how best to integrate grammar into communicative contexts remains central (Ellis, 2009). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provides a framework for combining meaning-focused interaction with form-focused instruction, enabling learners to internalize grammatical structures while engaging in authentic communication. This article demonstrates how TBLT can be used to teach forms of negation, including negative statements, questions, and polarity-sensitive items, to adolescent learners at B1–B2 proficiency levels.

Learner Profile

The target learners are 12 seventh-grade students (aged 12–13) at a presidential school in Karshi, Uzbekistan. Their English proficiency aligns with **CEFR B1**, with some students approaching B2. They study in a STEAM-focused curriculum taught in English and prepare for international qualifications such as IELTS and SAT. Learners prefer interactive grammar lessons that connect rules to real-life use, making TBLT a suitable approach for fostering both accuracy and fluency.

Literature review: Understanding negation

Negation is a fundamental grammatical feature, yet its complexity often challenges EFL learners (Young, 2003; Leech, 2006). Both authors identify “**not**” and its contracted forms (e.g., isn't, haven't) as the primary negators, while also acknowledging the role of negative words (e.g., never, nothing, nobody) and non-assertive items (e.g., any, ever).

- Young (2003) emphasizes structural rules, offering systematic explanations for transforming affirmative sentences into negatives and introducing auxiliary “do” for simple tenses.
- Leech (2006) extends the discussion to pragmatic functions and syntactic constraints, introducing concepts such as negative polarity and negative concord.

For intermediate learners, Young's structured approach supports explicit instruction, while Leech's pragmatic insights inform communicative practice.

Methodology: TBLT Framework

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Following Ellis (2009), the lesson employs a three-phase TBLT cycle (pre-task, task, post-task) integrating explicit and implicit instruction.

Pre-Task: Form-Focused Instruction

Objective: Familiarize students with negation forms using auxiliary verbs, contractions, and negative words.

- Warm-up: Convert affirmative sentences into negatives.
- Explicit instruction: Explain rule-based structures and common errors.
- Guided practice: Transform sample sentences (e.g., “Nafisa has been to Europe since 2020” → “Nafisa has not been to Europe since 2020”).

Task: Meaning-Focused Interaction

Objective: Use negation in authentic communication through a “**Find Someone Who...**” activity.

- Learners ask and answer questions using negative forms (e.g., “Have you been to Paris?” → “No, I haven’t been to Paris”).
- Follow-up questions deepen engagement (“You haven’t been to Paris? Why not?”).

Post-Task: Reflection and Task Repetition

- Error correction. Analyze and correct sentences with errors in negation.
- Repetition with variation. Perform the same task using different prompts, reinforcing accurate negative forms.

Discussion

This TBLT design supports both accuracy and fluency:

- Accuracy is developed through explicit pre-task instruction and post-task correction, aligning with Guvendir & Hardacre (2020).
- Fluency is promoted in the task phase, where learners negotiate meaning in real communicative contexts.
- The cyclical nature of the lesson reinforces learning through repetition and reflection.

By embedding grammar in communicative tasks, learners develop not only rule-based knowledge but also pragmatic competence in using negation appropriately.

Conclusion

TBLT offers a dynamic alternative to traditional grammar instruction by situating grammar learning within authentic interaction. The proposed lesson demonstrates how explicit instruction and meaning-focused tasks can be combined to teach negation effectively, meeting the linguistic and communicative needs of B1–B2 learners.

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