

## TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: INVESTIGATING ENGAGEMENT ACROSS DIFFERENT EFL TASKS

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the relationship between Task-Based Language Teaching and student engagement in English as a Foreign Language classrooms. It focuses on how different task types influence learners' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement during language learning activities. Individual, pair-work, group, problem-solving, and project-based tasks are considered in relation to students' participation, concentration, motivation, interaction, and willingness to communicate. The study highlights the importance of meaningful communication, appropriate task complexity, learner autonomy, collaboration, and teacher support in creating engaging learning environments.*

**Keywords:** *Task-Based Language Teaching, student engagement, EFL, language learning, communicative tasks, task types, learner autonomy, collaboration, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement.*

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary English as a Foreign Language education, increasing students' active participation and sustained engagement has become a central concern for language teachers and researchers. Traditional teacher-centered approaches often emphasize the transmission of linguistic knowledge, while students may have limited opportunities to use English for meaningful communication. In contrast,

Task-Based Language Teaching places communicative tasks at the center of the learning process and encourages learners to use the target language to achieve specific outcomes. Through task completion, students can develop not only their linguistic competence but also their problem-solving, collaboration, and critical-thinking skills.

Student engagement is a multidimensional construct that generally encompasses behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Behavioral engagement refers to students' participation and effort during learning activities, whereas cognitive engagement involves attention, strategic thinking, and investment in learning. Emotional engagement reflects learners' interest, enjoyment, confidence, and attitudes toward classroom activities. The nature and design of classroom tasks may influence these dimensions differently. For example, collaborative tasks can promote interaction and participation, while problem-solving and project-based tasks may require greater cognitive investment and sustained attention.

### **MAIN PART**

Task-Based Language Teaching has emerged as an influential approach to second and foreign language education, emphasizing the use of meaningful tasks as the primary means of promoting language development. Unlike traditional approaches that organize instruction around grammatical structures or isolated vocabulary items, TBLT encourages learners to use the target language to accomplish communicative purposes. Ellis argues that a task should require learners to focus primarily on meaning and should result in an outcome that can be evaluated according to whether the communicative goal has been achieved [1]. This emphasis on purposeful language use makes tasks

particularly relevant to the development of learner engagement in EFL classrooms.

A central characteristic of TBLT is the active role assigned to learners. During task performance, students are expected to interpret information, negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, solve problems, and make decisions. Such activities can create opportunities for authentic or simulated communication and reduce learners' dependence on teacher-fronted instruction. Long emphasizes that task-based instruction can provide learners with opportunities to use language in context while responding to communicative needs. Consequently, students are not simply recipients of linguistic information; they become active participants in the construction of meaning [2].

Student engagement is another important concept in understanding the effectiveness of task-based instruction. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conceptualize engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Behavioral engagement concerns students' participation, effort, persistence, and involvement in classroom activities. In an EFL context, it may be observed when students actively contribute to discussions, complete assigned tasks, interact with classmates, and remain focused during language activities. High behavioral engagement is therefore closely connected with the amount of time and effort learners invest in classroom learning.

Cognitive engagement refers to the mental investment students make in learning. It involves strategic thinking, problem-solving, concentration, reflection, and the willingness to deal with challenging learning activities. Different EFL tasks can require different levels of cognitive engagement. For instance, a vocabulary-matching activity may

require relatively limited cognitive processing, whereas a problem-solving task involving unfamiliar information may encourage learners to compare alternatives, formulate hypotheses, justify their opinions, and reach a conclusion. Therefore, task complexity and cognitive demand may play an important role in determining the extent to which learners become intellectually involved in classroom activities [3].

Emotional engagement represents learners' affective responses to the learning process. Interest, enjoyment, confidence, enthusiasm, anxiety, boredom, and perceived relevance are among the factors that can influence emotional engagement. TBLT can potentially strengthen positive emotional engagement by providing learners with opportunities to communicate, cooperate, and work toward meaningful outcomes. However, task design must take learners' proficiency levels, interests, cultural backgrounds, and individual differences into consideration. Tasks that are excessively difficult may increase anxiety and frustration, whereas appropriately challenging tasks may promote interest and a sense of achievement.

Different task types may produce different patterns of engagement. Individual tasks, for example, can encourage learners to work independently and monitor their own performance. They may be particularly useful for developing individual responsibility and self-regulation. Pair-work tasks provide learners with opportunities for negotiation of meaning and immediate interaction with a peer. Such tasks may increase participation because students have more opportunities to speak than they would in whole-class discussions [4]. Group tasks can create a collaborative learning environment in which learners exchange perspectives, distribute responsibilities, and jointly construct solutions. Nevertheless, group work does not automatically

guarantee high engagement because unequal participation, dominant group members, or communication difficulties can reduce the involvement of some learners.

## CONCLUSION

Task-Based Language Teaching provides a valuable framework for increasing student engagement in EFL classrooms by placing meaningful communication and purposeful language use at the center of instruction. The analysis demonstrates that student engagement is multidimensional and can be examined through behavioral, cognitive, and emotional perspectives. Different types of EFL tasks may contribute to these dimensions in different ways depending on their objectives, complexity, interactional patterns, and relevance to learners' interests.

## References

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