



Using Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) Techniques for Teaching English Language Prepositions

MEHRNAZ JAHANSHAH¹, KHALED KORDI TAMANDANI²

¹ Research scholar (ELT), Dept. of English, Aligarh Muslim University, India

² Research scholar (ELT), Dept. of English, Aligarh Muslim University, India

E-mail: jahanshahi.mehrnaz@gmail.com; khaledkordi@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

Grammar is the main structure of any language. The role of grammar in learning a new language, like English cannot be ignored or neglected. It is like an invisible force that helps us to make sentences. For being an expert of any language, we need knowledge of its grammar. We cannot express our thoughts and ideas, in an efficient way, without putting our words in an acceptable and proper structure. The task-based approach is one of the efficient approaches for learning and teaching English grammar. This approach focuses on the task of classroom activity and the meaning. This method allows the learners to use whatever language they want and help them to focus entirely on the meaning of their message. Using task-based approach in teaching grammar focuses on language task more than the theory of grammar. The task-based approach is better than traditional method as it stresses on communication and it uses the language to accomplish a task like in real life situations rather than performing grammar exercises. In this paper, we introduced some task based exercises for teaching English grammar prepositions which can be used by teachers in classroom activities. These activities can encourage the learners in learning English grammar which is believed to be a tiresome subject for many English learners either ESL or EFL.

Keywords: Task-based Language Teaching, TBLT, Approach, English grammar, Prepositions, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Today, English language is referred as a global language, as it is used in many countries around the world. English language has been swiftly spread around the world over the last few decades “just as Latin steamrollered its way across Europe 2,000 years ago, crushing dozens of other languages, English has become the lingua franca of our times.” (Morrison 2002: p. 7). Most countries communicate with each other through the English language. So competence in the English language is a big privilege. It is the language of success and opportunities. It is used globally and more than any language throughout history. The English language is known as the “de facto lingua franca”. It is employed in the fields of science, education, politics, business, transportation, etc. The English language helps people from different ethnics and backgrounds to communicate with one another. Learning English is important as; it helps the learner to access to technological, scientific, and academic resources.



1. The Importance of Grammar in English Language.

Grammar is the backbone of any language. The role of grammar in learning a new language, like English cannot be ignored or neglected. It is like an invisible force that helps us to make sentences. For mastery of any language, we need knowledge of its grammar. We cannot express our thoughts and ideas, in an efficient way, without putting our words in acceptable and proper structure. According to, Thornbury (1999), "grammar is a tool for making meaning" (p. 4). By going through the history of grammar, we can understand that the English language is a living system of communication and grammar is in every part of that communication. Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are the base of any language. To achieve the communicative goal, we need grammar to tidy up vocabulary in a socially acceptable manner. Being weak in the field of grammar will slow down the communication purpose and the ideas of the speaker cannot be conveyed clearly.

Linguistics defines grammar as a set of rules that govern words, clauses, and phrases in any language. These rules include the study of syntax, phonology, and morphology. To learn a new language, any learner should have the ability to produce and recognize well-established sentences and follow text and words grammar also. Non-linguists define grammar with a very broad meaning. According to Jeremy Butterfield (2008) "Grammar is often a generic way of referring to any aspect of English that people object to" (p. 142). Grammar is usually considered as a way to put the words together in a meaningful manner, to convey the real meaning which cannot be expressed just by the use of vocabulary. In a simple discussion, it is possible to convey the meaning just by the help of vocabulary, but in a little complicated discussion, it is impossible to convey our meaning effectively and acceptably without the use of proper grammar.

While learning a new language, importance of grammar cannot be ignored. Different people can have different understanding of the word "Grammar". Ordinary People may think of grammar as the correctness and incorrectness of their speaking. For students, it may refer to a list of rules that builds the structure of sentences. Learning grammar for a second language learner cannot be done through unconscious assimilation. There should be taught and study in a proper manner. For communicating in an artistic way, we need knowledge of grammar. To convey our meaning to the receiver in communication, we send messages to the receiver and these messages should be explicit. Otherwise, it may lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding. The messages are sent by the grammar.

2. Task-Based Approach in Grammar Teaching

Over the past twenty-five years, the Task-based approach in language teaching has attracted a lot of attention. This approach focuses on the task of classroom activity and the meaning. This method allows the learners to use whatever language they want and help them to focus entirely on the meaning of their message. This method helps the learner to feel the real-life communicative situation. In Jane Willis's *Task-based learning model*, learners focus on the communicative task, and they do not pay attention to the format first. After finishing the task, learners report how they accomplished the task. Sometimes, they listen to fluent speaker performing the same task. There is a particular focus on the form of the language at the end of the task. (Willis, 2005).

Using the Task-based approach in teaching grammar creates a focus on language task more than the theory of grammar. The Task-based approach is a better than traditional method as it stresses on communication and uses the language to accomplish a task like in real life situations rather than performing grammar exercises. The first aim of Task-based grammar instruction is language fluency, and accuracy comes later. But in the traditional grammar instruction, the first goal is grammatical accuracy and fluency comes afterward. Unlike traditional grammar instruction, in task-based grammar teaching, the emphasis is on language fluency, and accuracy comes later. Traditional models more often stress on accuracy first and then move toward fluency after grammatical consistency is achieved. Allowing students make wrong grammar



choices because of fluency is sometimes unpleasant for teachers whose natural instinct it is to correct any detected errors, but that often happens in Task-based grammar instruction. (Harmer, 2007)

3. Task-based Techniques for Teaching Prepositions in English Grammar

This section introduces the proposed tasks and their instructions for the purpose of grammar improvement. These tasks can be best used for classroom activities.

Therefore, to improve their knowledge of prepositions, the tasks are examined, and they are efficiently practiced through the following tasks. The teaching modules based on tasks and activities were used to teach prepositions. Here the role of the teacher is as a guide and facilitator, helping the students to learn the prepositions.

3.1. Task 1: Newspaper clippings

In this task, the instructor would introduce different types of English prepositions to learners for which s/he can use audio-visual aids such as video clips or pictures. The instructor then would ask the students to go through the newspaper clippings individually which are prepared and distributed among them by the teacher. The students should list all prepositions on a separate paper and the same should be underlined or marked in the newspaper cutting also. Here, the instructor would act as a guide and facilitator, helping the students to learn. A lot of interaction with the teacher may occur as they would have confusion about the prepositions. This simple task can help them to be sure about their basic knowledge on English prepositions

3.2. Task 2: Playing the Game of Time Dominoes

In this task, a teacher with the use of audio-visual aids would describe the learners about the prepositions of time. The teacher can assist the students to understand how to use prepositions of time with this dominoes game. The teacher should make one copy of the worksheet for each pair of students and cut into pieces of dominoes type paper as indicated in Figure 1.

Christmas day	in	night	on	10 minutes	at
Friday	in	9 o'clock	on	2012	at
22 nd June	in	noon	on	winter	at
my birthday	in	19:30	on	the morning	at
May 1 st	in	bedtime	on	a minute	at
Tuesday	in	half past two	on	1969	at
14 th February	in	midday	on	summer	at
New year's Eve	in	7 o'clock	on	May	at

Figure 1: Samples of Dominos for Conducting Preposition Game(prepositions of time)

(www.teach-this.com)



After cutting and making dominos out of the worksheet, then the teacher would divide the students into pairs and give each pair a set of shuffled dominoes. She then should ask the students to split out the dominoes equally. One student should place a domino in front of them, and the other student should try to match the preposition with a time expression by placing one of his or her dominoes at either end of the first domino. The students should continue taking it in turns to put dominoes until one student has no dominoes left. That student would be announced as the winner. If a student puts down a domino that was incorrect, they must pick up their card and s/he would miss a turn. If a student couldn't go, they would be passed to the other student.

3.3. Task 3: Playing the game of Place Dominos (invite me out)

In this task teacher or instructor would explain about the prepositions of place by demonstrating them with the help of audio-visual aids such as video clips. S/he then would teach the students how to play the game and its rules. The teacher also can provide some wallpapers in which the prepositions of place are graphically explained. S/he can mount the wallpapers on the wall of their classroom.

- **Invite me out**

As it is mentioned the name of this game is “invite me out “. In this teaching task, students play a game of dominoes, matching places and time expressions with the correct preposition. The students also practice making invitations using time and place prepositions.

The teacher should make one copy of the worksheet for each group of four and cut it into domino pieces of paper as indicated in Figure 2. Before beginning the game, the teacher should review the prepositions of time and place: *in*, *on*, and *at* with the help of wallpapers.

Invite me out

2015	at	7 p.m.	on	Saturday	in
summer	at	the park	on	the 8 th of July	in
5 minutes	at	midnight	on	Monday morning	in
the afternoon	at	the cinema	on	Tuesday afternoon	in
winter	at	night	on	Friday evening	in
an hour	at	the weekend	on	the 7 th of April	in
Paris	at	home	on	Thursday afternoon	in
the morning	at	one o'clock	on	the 2 nd of December	in
Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite
Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite	Invite

Figure 2 Sample Dominos Games for Teaching Preposition
(www.teach-this.com)



- **Procedure of the Task**

The teacher should explain the students in the class that they are going to play a game of dominoes in which they should match a place or time expression with the correct preposition and that the aim of the game is to get rid of all their dominoes. S/he would separate the students into groups of four and give each group a set of dominoes with the invite cards mixed in. S/he then will ask them to deal out five dominoes each and to leave the rest in a pile, face down. The first player must put down one of their dominoes face up. The player on their left must then put down one of their dominoes, making sure that the preposition matched the time or place on the first player's domino. The players will take it in turns to add dominoes in this way. If a player couldn't put down one of their dominoes, they will have two options; they could play an invite card (if they have one) by holding up their card and asking another player to go out, stating the time and place, e.g. *Would you like to go to the cinema on Friday evening?* When they have done this, they should return the card to the bottom of the pile. The other option for them is to take a domino from the top of the pile and put it down if they can. Invite cards can only be played when a student cannot put down a time or place domino. The winner is the first player who would get rid of all his/her dominoes. When the groups have finished a game, they can shuffle and play another round. The above- mentioned figure (Figure 2) shows the designed dominoes that can be used for this task.

- 4. **Conclusion**

Nowadays Task-based methods and practices are being the center of attraction in introducing new methods of teaching and learning English. As we know, learning grammar and especially learning about prepositions with traditional methods of teaching could be tedious and even difficult for some learners. Hence using task-based exercises in a classroom can be very helpful and effective in encouraging the students for learning English grammar prepositions. Since the students of high school or middle school are very playful, the introduced tasks in this paper which are basically in the forms of game tasks can significantly bring them more encouragement in learning English grammar and its different prepositions. Moreover learning about preposition in English grammar is quite challenging as there are different prepositions which can be used in a very diverse number of situations. Therefore for overcoming this issue, we can use task-based methods of teaching which could enlighten the joy of learning in learners and it provides a student-centered atmosphere in the class rather than teacher-centered.

Bibliography:

- Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to teach grammar*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Butterfield, J. (2008). *Damp squid: The English language laid bare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. (2005). *A framework for task-based learning*. London: Longman.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of english language teaching*. Essex, England: Longman.
- Morrison R. (2002). The Englishing of Earth. *The Times Online*. From:<http://www.xefl.com/article18.html>
- Prepositions of Time*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 01, 2017, from <https://www.teach-this.com/resources/activities/prepositions-time>