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Task-Based Learning and Students' Motivation in the Armenian Classroom Setting

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This study attempted to explore and answer the following question: To what extent does task-based teaching/learning (TBT) motivate students and lead them to successful learning? It also intends to investigate whether the effectiveness of task completion, i.e. the outcome, depends on the fact that students carry out the tasks individually versus in groups or pairs.

The data was collected through conducting various task types like information gap, reasoning gap, problem solving activities, as well as questionnaires, interviews with the students and teachers, and the field notes taken by the investigator. All these tasks were carried out in groups, pairs, individually or in whole class discussions.

The experiment lasted for three weeks (seven classes). The participants of the study were students of two classes at the same level, and the teachers of the two classes. The researcher divided students into pairs or groups and switched the turns every lesson. The students filled out the closed-ended task questionnaires at the end of each lesson in order to assess the relevance and appropriateness of the tasks. At the end of the study, the students and the teachers were asked to fill out an open-ended questionnaire intended to measure the overall effectiveness of the task-based teaching approach and to examine which types of class organization were more successful in promoting and developing students' performance.

The results of the analysis indicate that a task-based approach to EFL might offer numerous benefits to the Armenian EFL learners. The findings of the study might help Armenian teachers to provide the learners with a variety of learning tasks and instructions that would give an opportunity to involve learner in a way of learning that is communicative, creative and cognitively-challenging.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Armenia is a country where English is used as a foreign language. English language learning is introduced in schools and other educational institutions mostly through the Grammar-Translational approach. In recent years, there has been some tendency to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and many other approaches that have gained popularity among scholars and teachers in the post soviet environment. In light of this various seminars, work shops, and training sessions have been conducted for teachers to familiarize them with new methods and approaches to language teaching and learning. But all these approaches and methods appear to have had little or no effect on the Armenian EFL setting, where a form-focused approach encourages the use of traditional methods of language teaching, which feature the practice of discrete language elements.

These traditional methods of teaching with their emphasis on the accurate performance of the tasks, interferes with learners' abilities to exercise and use language meaningfully, creatively and what is more important - authentically. No language can be taught and mastered only by means of rules, patterns and examples. Learners need to feel that language learning can be achieved through communicative tasks and activities where they can create and exchange meanings (Leaver and Willis, 2004).

Language learning is a creative process, which means that learners should be exposed to more natural and authentic language helpful in expressing their own meanings.

This type of approach to language learning can introduce task-based teaching (TBT), which suggests that learners practice “communicative tasks which involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing in the target language paying attention to the meaning” (Willis, 1996. p.115). The task types integrated in TBT promote and develop the abilities of the learners to express, create and exchange meaning in real and natural situations. Various task types that are introduced in task-based learning encourage learners to develop useful and effective strategies to achieve their communicative goal and succeed, as well as motivate them. Students

appear to be more motivated by activities that they perceive as useful or relevant, and also those which they are able to use actively outside the classroom.

Motivation is a crucial factor in the language learning process; the absence or the presence of it may either cause learners to achieve high levels of learning or to stay removed from the process. Teachers should provide students with opportunities for free communication based on innovative instructions (accuracy independent), activities and tasks that reduce stress where they will be able to express themselves, use their imagination, creativity and where they won't be afraid of making grammar mistakes that mainly prevent them from using language freely and confidently. Along with cognitive activities and the tasks, teacher should provide learners with strategies that help students to cope with "anxiety provoking situations" (Dörnyei, 2002).

Another issue which I would like to address is whether the tasks are maintained better individually or through cooperative learning. It is obvious that students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. I believe that one effective way to involve the learner is to provide him/her with the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas, negotiate input, practice new language items, and various communication strategies through collaboration with other peers. "Collaborative learning can help learners use what they already know to go beyond what they currently think" (Nunan, 1992). Cooperative learning, under proper conditions, encourages peer learning and peer support, entails working together to achieve common learning goals. This is not to suggest that learners cannot work alone. Learners can also be involved in the learning process working individually, but in this case, they need to have very strong motivation.

Taking into consideration all that has been said so far, I am going to embark on a study that will either support or refute the idea that the effectiveness of the task outcome may change depending on the way the task is carried out (individually versus cooperatively).

I would like to present my research project starting with literature review part where I introduce my readership the description of Task-based Teaching approach as well as the detailed explanation of various ways of class organization. In the next, methodology chapter, I am going to

discuss the setting of the conducted study, describe the participants involved in the project, the research design and the task types. In the following data analysis chapter I would analyze different task types and find out which of them are more successful for learner achievement.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This study investigates to what extent the teacher can motivate student learning using a task-based approach and the difference in task outcomes between group/pair work and individual work. The first thing that comes to the mind of most Armenian learners as well as teachers while talking about “task”, is one that was used over the last 30-40 years, text translation.

Dealing with text translation as a language learning task, motivation was the last thing that either student or the teacher could think about as an educational factor. The primary role in completing the task was given not with the intention of engaging and motivating students, but with the intention of carrying out the task to promote the pre-set outcomes. Teachers did not try to involve students in various ways of completing the task. Students could fulfill the task in different types of class organization, like individual, pair/group work. With the help of this approach, teachers might increase students’ motivation and enjoyment while dealing with the task.

However, the purpose of this investigation is not to measure the motivation of students dealing with translations, but to find out what kinds of tasks Task-based Teaching (TBT) can introduce to both learners and teachers and how these tasks can motivate and stimulate the learning process. This makes it necessary that I discuss the concept of motivation as one of the most crucial factors in language education. In addition, I will focus on some issues drawn from the investigations of various researchers concerning whether tasks are carried out more effectively in pairs/groups, individually or in whole class discussions.

2.2. Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is the most controversial and indefinable construct both in the fields of psychology and education. Motivation helps us understand people’s behavior in everyday life, attempts to explain why and how some individuals succeed in their personal and professional dealings whereas others do not (Dörnyei, 2002).

Gardner & Lambert (1998) define motivation as the combination of effort and desire to accomplish the goal of language learning and positive attitude toward learning the target language. Students' motivation naturally has to do with their wish to participate and succeed in learning, concerning the reasons or goals that lie beneath their involvement in academic activities.

Gardner & Lambert (1998) distinguish between integrative and instrumental motivation. The former deals with attitudes and interests of the L2 learners toward the people and culture represented by the target language group. The latter, instrumental motivation, deals with learners' concerns to acquire L2 for business or educational purposes.

According to Dörnyei (2002) motivation is most effectively investigated within the context of task-based learning. There are many tasks through which learners' motivation can be examined and analyzed. Task types can be either motivating or not, and when dealing with different kinds of tasks, learners come out being more or less motivated. The crucial issue here is to choose carefully the most appropriate learning tasks for students engaging in the learning process, thereby promoting enthusiasm among students dealing with the tasks and activities. It is important to get students to participate in tasks that are interesting, creative and innovative. Fulfillment of these kinds of the tasks will motivate learners by making them feel that their participation is important.

The task-based approach provides learners with many tasks that directly connect with the "real-world" of the target language, giving students the opportunity to be engaged in this "world". These kinds of tasks having a clear resemblance with real life, where learners use language naturally and creatively, thus greatly stimulating and motivating students' learning. Being involved in these tasks, students behave naturally and apply their knowledge immediately in practice which also motivates them and increases their confidence. In trying out various task types, students gain competence and are able to operate outside the classroom setting with the help of communicative strategies mastered during classes. In this way, they find themselves in situations where they may need to interact, solve problems, make decisions, and arrange meetings and actively communicate in the real setting. Leaver and Willis (2004) introduce many cases where tasks primarily influence

and increase learners' motivation to use language to communicate, interact, make requests, suggestions, and etc.

3.3. Task-Based Teaching/Learning

In our country the English language is taught as a foreign language, the main purpose of which is to use it as a necessary tool for international communication. In spite of this, the educational system appears to stress and highlight grammar and formal accuracy in the teaching and learning of English. Students are expected to learn and repeat the target language forms and utterances where there is no place for creativity and self-expression. As a result many students leave institutes unable to communicate and convey their meanings in English. This approach has much in common with a behaviourist learning theory, which adheres to the Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) approach (Edwards & Willis, 2005). According to the conventional wisdom of TEFL, not everything that is taught can be learned and language is not always developed due to the classroom instructions (Leaver & Willis, 2004).

However, with the changes in teaching/learning English as a foreign language that are taking place all over the world, the educational system of Armenia is turning step by step toward approaches that develop real communication skills where students can use more natural language, express and use meaningful language, and interact in groups and pairs (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Learners are able more and more to use language freely and to sustain communication.

Task-based teaching (TBT) is believed to be one of the approaches that emphasize real-life and creative language use. TBT is widely used in the world and finds recognition in our country as well. Task-based language teaching is defined as teaching/learning that is completely based on tasks (Ellis, 2003).

3.4. Task as a term

In this section, I would like to introduce my readership to various interpretations of the term “task” offered by various field practitioners. The term task has various definitions and interpretations in scientific literature. The most common factors of those definitions concern the tasks that are meaning-focused and are carried out in order to achieve the required goals and where successful completion involves use of natural language (Ellis, 2003).

At this point, it will be useful to consider following the table proposed by Johnson (2003), which provides some definitions, based on Kumaravadivelu (1993), of the term used in the specialized task-based-teaching related sense. This table from Johnson (2003), will help us to put the paper into its fitting context and clarify the term task:

Table 1: (Johnson, 2003)

| | |
|--|--|
| Long (1985:89) (As cited in Johnson (2003)). | ‘a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward’. “Tasks” are things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists’ (both p. 89) |
| Crookes (1986:1) (As cited in Johnson (2003)). | ‘a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, at work, or used to elicit data for research’ |
| Wright (1987:48) (As cited in Johnson (2003)). | ‘instructional questions which ask, demand, or even invite learners (or teachers) to perform operations on input data’ |
| Krahnke (1987:57) (As cited in Johnson (2003)). | ‘the defining characteristic of task-based content is that it uses activities that the learners have to do for non-instructional purposes outside of the classroom as opportunities for language learning. Tasks are distinct from other activities to the degree that they have non-instructional purposes’ |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Breen (1987:23) (As cited in Johnson (2003)).</p> | <p>‘a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulators and decision-making’</p> |
| <p>Candlin (1987:10) (As cited in Johnson (2003)).</p> | <p>‘one of a set of differentiated, sequencable, problem-posing activities involving learners’ cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu’</p> |
| <p>Nunan (1989:10) (As cited in Johnson (2003)).</p> | <p>‘a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right’</p> |
| <p>Swales (1990:76) (As cited in Johnson (2003)).</p> | <p>‘one of a set of differentiated, sequencable goal-directed activities drawing upon a range of cognitive and communicative procedures relatable to the acquisition of pre-genre and genre skills appropriate to a foreseen or emerging sociorhetorical situation’</p> |
| <p>Skehan (1998:95) (As cited in Johnson (2003)).</p> | <p>‘... a task is an activity in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meaning is primary - there is some communication problem to solve - there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities - task completion has some priority in terms of outcome’ |

Task performance can involve the use of one or even all four language skills, receptive and productive. Tasks may promote not only the use of the four main skills but can also stimulate microskills and language strategies necessary for successful language learning.

Edwards & Willis (2005) define the term 'task' in a different way: 'A language learning task is:

- an activity
- that has a non-linguistic purpose or goal
- with a clear outcome
- and that uses any or all of the four language skills in its accomplishment
- by conveying meaning in a way that reflects real-world language use

According to Ellis (2003) a task can also involve cognitive processes as the various tasks vary in their complexity and demand learners implement a great range of cognitive processes like selecting, reasoning, classifying, sequencing and transformation of information. It might be helpful to think along the following lines of Ellis (2003, p. 16):

'A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes.'

By completing a task students get the opportunity to achieve an outcome concentrating primarily on meaning, having freedom to create and transform, modify and process different meanings without focusing on form. A task gives students room to develop communication strategies helpful in any kind of communication: spoken or written.

3.5. Group work or pair work

Various tasks/activities provided for learners to process and develop language skills can be maintained through different class organization types like pair/group work, individual or whole class discussions. Since interaction and communication are necessary for the language learning process, many teachers introduce their learners to tasks that should be performed in groups or pairs.

A variety of names are given to this form of teaching, and there are some distinctions among these: cooperative learning, collaborative learning, collective learning, learning communities, peer teaching, peer learning, reciprocal learning, team learning, study circles, study groups, and work groups. Overall, there are three general types of group work: informal learning groups, formal learning groups, and study teams (Smith, 1991).

Tudor (1996), states that “Collaborative learning can help learners use what they already know to go beyond what they currently think”. Collaborative learning, under proper conditions, encourages peer learning and peer support, entails working together to achieve common learning goals. Positive interdependence among the members of the group is also necessary for academic achievement and beneficial for learning complex materials (Kohonen, 1992). The discussion and shared exploration of learning difficulties in group work activities constitutes a form of learner involvement. Using the tasks that have to be carried out in groups or pairs the teacher should encourage the learner to collaborate with peers and teach all required strategies for cooperative work. Another reason for arranging group work is that students learn to depend on each other and to help each other to accomplish shared goals.

The most effective classroom organization is pair and group work. Celce-Murcia (2001), for example, suggests that in such classes, students may have an opportunity to use the target language, to speak more frequently and perform longer stretches of speech, to learn better from one another, and to increase their personal sense of relevance. Students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Researchers report that, in spite of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the

same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes.

Nation (1997) offers his way of classifying group work activities as the distribution of the information necessary to complete the activity. In a “cooperating arrangement”, all learners have equal access to the same material or information to do the task. In the “superior-interior arrangement”, only one member of the group has the information needed by the others. In the “combining arrangement”, each member has a different piece of information needed by the others. In the “individual arrangement”, each member has the same information but should deal with a diverse part of it. All these types of group work activity achieve different learning goals.

Working in pairs/groups has certain advantages as well as disadvantages. Jacobs (1998) provides a list of ten probable advantages of group-work compared with teacher-centered instruction. In order to uncover the most productive way to promote pair/group work activities it is useful to be aware of the benefits and limitations of such kind of class organization in TBL approach. In the following table, we can see the list of ten potential advantages of group activities in language instruction (based on Ellis, 2003, p. 267):

Table 2:

Ellis (2003)

| ADVANTAGE | COMMENT |
|---|--|
| 1. The quality of learner speech can increase | In teacher-fronted classrooms, the teacher typically speaks 80% of the time; in group work more students talk for more of the time. |
| 2. The variety of speech acts can increase | In teacher-fronted classrooms, students are cast in a responsive role, but in group work they can perform a wide range of roles, including those involved in the negotiation of meaning. |
| 3. There can be more individualization of instruction | In teacher-fronted lessons, teachers shape their instruction to the needs of the average student |

| | |
|---|--|
| | but in group work the needs of individual students can be attended to. |
| 4. Anxiety can be reduced | Students feel less nervous speaking in an L2 in front of a few of their peers than in front of the whole class. |
| 5. Motivation can increase | Students will be less competitive when working in groups and are more likely to encourage each other. |
| 6. Enjoyment can increase | Students are ‘social animals’ and thus enjoy interacting with others in groups; in teacher-fronted classrooms student-student interaction is often proscribed. |
| 7. Independence can increase | Group activities help students to become independent learners. |
| 8. Social integration can increase | Group activities enable students to get to know each other. |
| 9. Students can learn how to work together with others | In typical teacher-fronted classrooms, students are discouraged from helping each other; group work helps students to learn collaborative skills. |
| 10. Learning can increase | Learning is enhanced by group work because students are willing to take risks and can scaffold other’s efforts. |

However, when engaging students in pair/group interaction the teacher should take into consideration that it does not always guarantee 100% success in learning and in achieving the goals. In implementing my own study and dealing with different tasks I, as a teacher and researcher should

take this and other factors into consideration. For instance, there might be learners with certain negative attitudes toward working together, or students who will not be able to express themselves freely interacting with other peers. According to Prabhu (1987), the teacher has to take into consideration sociocultural differences of learners as well as psychological factors, as many students, for example, may feel shy or consider it humiliating to make mistakes in the presence of peers.

Another argument against group work is that in collaborative learning students concentrate on meaning and do not pay much attention to form. The teacher should realize that in communication the learner's speech is more spontaneous and it is difficult to avoid grammatical and phonological problems. According to Williams & Evans (1998), students are more careful with form when they are engaged in pre-task activity with the stress on grammatical and phonological aspects.

Conducting group work the teacher should also consider the fact that learners may use mostly their L1 in their group discussions to make their work easier (Ellis, 2003).

In order to be successful in arranging group work activity it is important to plan and understand the principles of group work. The main principles for perfectly organized group work are to get everyone interested, active and thinking.

3. 6. Individual work

Allowing learners to work on tasks individually fosters independence and autonomy. Individual work gives students an opportunity to approach the task according to their personalities and individual learning styles and to use as many types of strategies as necessary for task completion (Prabhu, 1987).

Working individually students have more opportunity to develop and create their own ideas as they do not need to share with others and are free from time limitations (Madrid, 1996). Working on the task individually students are able to concentrate not only on the final result as

often happens, too, in group work but also on the process of the task completion. Learners have more opportunities to use their own strategies and styles to adapt to the task. In individual work some students feel free from the pressure of peers as all students have different language abilities and in a group all learners whether proficient or less skilled should try to adjust to each other, which very often interferes with learners' capacity to express themselves.

In light of this, I would like to introduce my readership that my study, which attempted to investigate the role of the task-based teaching approach in learning English as a foreign language and various task types, might serve as motivating and stimulating the language learning process factor. The next aspect that I took into consideration was to find out whether the difference of the task outcomes depended on the issue that those tasks were carried out in pairs, groups, individually, or in whole class discussions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I propose to lay out the methodology for my study. The study was conducted to investigate and find out to what extent it was possible to motivate student learning by implementing a task-based learning approach and whether the difference in the task outcomes depends on the fact that the task was completed in group/pair work individually or in a classroom discussion.

Research Questions:

The theoretical issues and insights that I have examined so far have led me to propose the following research questions for my study:

1. To what extent can the teacher motivate students learning using task-based (TBT) approach to language teaching?
2. How do the outcomes of the tasks carried out individually versus in groups or pairs differ from each other?
3. What should the teacher take into consideration when using TBT in a classroom setting?

It is hoped that the ensuing chapters will provide sufficient scope and context for a fuller examination of the questions posed by my research.

In order to find out the answers to the questions posed in this research, it was necessary to provide students with different task types and opportunities to work at the task individually, in groups/pairs, and in classroom discussions. The tasks that were chosen for this investigation were meant to motivate students' creative and analytical thinking and to facilitate students' decision-making abilities as well as their abilities to solve problems and to negotiate in groups. Tasks had to involve both the comprehension and the production of language with a focus on meaning which would encourage language development (Willis, 1996). Tasks had to be conducted in a logical sequence starting from simpler and moving to more complex and demanding tasks. Prabhu (1987),

for instance, suggests various task types like information gap, reasoning gap and problem solving tasks, which I used while conducting my study.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the setting in which the study was conducted, the participants involved in the research, the instruments, the research design, the task types as well as how the different tasks might affect participants' performance, and to discuss in detail the data collecting the procedures.

3.2. The Armenian Setting

Armenia is a country where the English language is still taught and learned as a foreign language. The approach and the methods of teaching used by English language teachers have been mainly grammar-translation or audio-lingual. Reading, retelling and translating the texts and exercises given independently without any context were the main activities in an EFL classroom.

All the activities as well as the grammar-based exercises were carried out individually, checked, and corrected without any further discussions. Students lacked the ability to work or study collaboratively. Teachers were not wholly aware of the tasks that might motivate students' learning. Learners were not exposed to "real-life" communication skills. Having quite sufficient capacity to translate almost any given text even without any context they were not able to interact in real world situations, nor to convey and understand meanings or solve problems and make decisions.

Having completed the tasks and activities individually, the learners were not able to interact and collaborate with their peers, express themselves, share ideas and develop their communicative skills. The efficiency of peer learning has been researched in many studies. There are many educational reasons for requiring students to participate in group activities. Cooperative learning enhances student understanding by having them learn from each other and benefit from activities that require them to articulate and test their knowledge. Cooperative learning, thereby, provides an opportunity for students to clarify and process their understanding of concepts through discussion and practice with peers.

There appears to be a paucity of research in Armenia that can help explain the usefulness of the types of tasks which affect students' motivation and develop their communicative abilities. In light of this, my research is an attempt to find how task types may influence students' performance.

3.3. Research Design

My study is a qualitatively oriented research project with some elements of case study. With the help of this study I should be able to find out to what extent task-based learning (TBL) motivates students and leads them to successful learning as well as to investigate whether the effectiveness of task completion, i.e. the outcome, depends on whether students carry out the tasks individually versus in groups or pairs. This type of research can provide me with the opportunity to implement various types of tasks and to observe and analyze how the variety of tasks can affect the learning process. I examined and compared data collected from two parallel classes.

Qualitatively oriented study can provide me as a researcher with all the necessary tools that will be useful in gathering and analyzing data. Implementing this study might be very important in testing out materials, methods, approaches and all kind of innovations necessary in developing a more effective language-learning process.

Case study research can provide me with the opportunity to observe and analyze simultaneously various factors concerning task-based learning and teaching. I will be able to examine how teachers' instructions affect learners' performance and compare data collected from different classes. Case study will help to solve different problems for both teachers and learners.

3.4. Participants

Six EFL teachers, I as a researcher and twenty-one fifth level students (18-50 years old) at the American University of Armenia participated in the study. All the teachers have graduated from the Certificate in Teaching English as Foreign Language (CTEFL) and Masters of Arts in Teaching English as Foreign Language (MA TEFL) programs at AUA. Both groups are experienced English language teachers.

The level of the students according to the placement test was determined to be intermediate. The students met three times a week for three hour lessons. During the whole session, students were exposed to CL teaching based on various task types and activities and got an opportunity to work in pairs/groups and individually.

I not only planned the specifics of the study but also participated in it in my capacity as an ‘observer’. The participating teachers also filled out the questionnaires at the end of the study. The researcher observed the classes during the investigation and took field-notes.

3.5. Tasks

Various types of tasks based on materials introduced in the students’ textbooks were used for this investigation. Tasks were administered and maintained through different ways of class organization, such as pair work, group work, individual work and whole class discussions. Different tasks and activities were introduced to the students to find out which of the classroom organization and task types provided and facilitated the best means for a task-based teaching/learning approach. The most effective tasks that were used among students of intermediate level were those which related to their personal lives.

3.5. 1. Problem Solving

In this section, I would like to introduce my readership to some of the task types I used in my study. The first of the tasks discussed below is a problem solving task. In a problem solving task students are exposed to a problem and a set of relevant information. Students had to arrive at a solution through negotiation of meaning, discussion and interaction with each other.

3.5.2. Opinion Gap

Opinion gap tasks are used to engage students in creating new meanings. In most of those activities, students have to complete a story and compare the ending or give opinions on social issues. In those tasks, various materials could be used (maps, pictures, charts, pieces of literature, etc.) where each person had access to only a part of the information either the beginning or the end, another part of the information is required to achieve. Learners complete the task predicting or guessing the missing information as well as negotiating and sharing the information they have with the others.

3.5.3. Imagination Gap

In this task type, students are provided with the same input (a picture, film, text, etc.). Different learners respond, produce their associations and express their own ideas dealing with the task. Taking into consideration whether the task was maintained individually versus in pairs/groups or through class discussion, learners got the opportunity to negotiate and exchange meanings with each other.

3.5.4. Decision Making

The principle of this task is to reach a decision or solution through some kind of interaction. Decision-making tasks were based on a piece of information that is given in a “pre-

task” stage or information known by the learners from their personal life experience. In those tasks learners work individually or together to find the solution and come to the final decision.

3.6. Field Notes

During the task completing procedure, I observed the students and took down field notes. The field notes contain all necessary information for subsequent data analysis as well as the group number, the date, the task type, number of students present at the class, the time when the students start to work, and the purpose of the task. The field notes also describe the setting and the arrangement of the students. This information provides a clearer picture of what is going on in the class.

3.7. Questionnaires

After completing each task students were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to measure their motivation, as well as whether the content of the task/activity addressed their interests and whether they would be able to use the knowledge gained during the task completion outside the classroom. The questionnaires were also meant to provide us with the information necessary to find out if the task completion was effective in groups, pairs, individually or in whole class discussions. Each student filled out the questionnaires anonymously and individually. The questionnaires included six questions, some of which were changed depending on the task type. All questions were asked in English. (see Appendix 1)

At the end of the study, students were asked to fill out an open-ended questionnaire, consisted of eight questions aimed to elicit the usefulness of the study. This questionnaire provided students with opportunity to explain their answers share their ideas and express their own opinions about the types of the tasks/activities used in the study as well as thoughts about class organization. (see Appendix 2)

The teachers were asked to fill out an open-ended questionnaire, which consisted of seven questions. The questions were designed to find out more about the effectiveness of TBL approach as teaching method and students attitude toward it based on teachers' own experience. All questions were in English. (see Appendix 3)

3.8. Procedure

The data collecting procedure lasted for four weeks starting from June 18 to July 13, 2007. Two groups of students of the same fifth level but of various age ranges and different backgrounds were involved in the study. In first group (group 'A') consisted of 13 students ranging from 17-25 years old; the second group ('B') consisted of 13 students from 25-45 years old. Students met three times a week for three-hour lessons.

The tasks and activities that had to be used in the study were taken and adapted from various sources and from the main course book used by students during their classes. Students evinced a keen sense of participation while completing the various tasks/activities individually, in groups, pairs or in whole class discussion. Every subsequent class, students changed the type of class organization. Both groups were working at the same task but in a different organization.

I took field notes observing how students dealt with the task/activity conducted for the study. I filled out in the diary the group number, the number of students present at the class, the task type and the way it was completed. After completing the task, the students were given a questionnaire to be completed. When all the students had finished filling out the questionnaire, their teacher continued the class.

3.9. Data Analysis

The collected data, questionnaires, the tasks/activities that were completed through various class organizations as well as the field notes taken during the study will be analyzed qualitatively in the following chapter. The task types and the transcription of audiotaped lessons are presented in the Appendix 4.

The analysis of field notes was based mainly on an investigation whether the students worked more productively in groups, pairs, individually or in whole class discussions. I believe that the questionnaires would help to find out which of the task types and activities require more creativity, interaction and was more interesting for the students.

In order to discover which type of class organization and which type of tasks/activities are more useful for interaction outside of class, I decide to use a close-ended questionnaire after each lesson. The final questionnaire was meant to be an open –ended questionnaire as I believed that it might serve to find out whether TBT/L approach can elicit students' interaction and provide them with the opportunity to share their ideas, opinions and develop better learning strategies.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate to what extent the Task-Based Teaching (TBT) approach could motivate students' language learning and whether the difference in the task outcomes depends on the fact that those tasks have been carried out in group/pair work, individually or through whole class discussions.

In this chapter I am going to analyze which task types were successfully used to promote the teaching/learning process during the study as well as to find out which kind of classroom organization (group/pair work, individual, whole class discussion) is more beneficial for learner achievement.

I used two types of data collection instruments to address the research questions of my study: teacher-researcher field notes and questionnaires for both students and teachers.

4.2. Administration of tasks/activities

All the tasks and activities used in my study were taught in a pedagogical sequence from easy to more challenging and demanding tasks. In order to make the tasks/activities easy to understand and perform, students were provided with a "pre-task" stage that involved various actions such as discussion of a specific topic, reading a text, article, listening to recordings necessary for students to understand the tasks better.

During the whole investigation, which lasted for 7 classes, a variety of task types were introduced to the students. The task consisted of listing, matching, sequencing, as well as open-ended tasks like analyzing, sharing ideas and experiences, telling stories, writing narratives. All the materials used for collecting data were taken and adapted from various teaching sources, as well as from text books used in the "General English" course and from the world wide web.

The following table shows the tasks/activities and types of class organization that were implemented and analyzed as part of my study.

| DATE | TOPIC | TYPES OF CLASS ORGANIZATION | | ACTIVITIES |
|----------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | CLASS 'A' | CLASS 'B' | |
| 18.06.07 | “Day and Night” | Whole-class discussion. | Pair work | Problem Solving |
| 20.06.07 | “The Mystery of Sleep” | Individual | Group work | Decision making |
| 22.06.07 | “Generation Gap” | Group work | Pair work | Problem Solving |
| 25.06.07 | “The wisdom of age” | Individual | Individual | Imagination Gap/Opinion Gap |
| 27.06.07 | “Pollution” | Group work | Pair work | Decision making/Problem solving |
| 02.07.07 | “Interview a historical person” | Pair work | Individual | Imagination Gap |
| 06.07.07 | “The art of complaining” | Group work | Whole-class discussion | Problem Solving |

During the task/activity completion procedure the students from one class were assigned to work in pairs or individually while students of another class worked in groups or in whole class discussions. I changed the class organization every time to see which type of work as well as what kind of task/activity led to more effective fulfillment of the task. I also changed the pairs and group participants every class in order to promote collaborative learning and develop abilities of students to work with different people. While doing pair work there was always a

student who did not have a partner and who either worked with the teacher or joined with one of the pairs.

While completing all the tasks/activities, students were required to participate through exchanging of ideas, opinions, suggestions; to use comprehension checks and clarification requests. The task completion data was collected and analyzed through handouts, audio recordings and close-ended questionnaires.

As my study relates the participants to place, performance and progress, I believe that it will be useful to present the discussion of findings as a continuing narrative. Therefore, I propose to do that by describing the dynamics of classroom involvement and the outcomes that I was able observe over a period of seven days.

4.2.1. First Day of the Study

The task of the first day of the study was based on the topic “Day and night”. In a ‘pre-task’ stage students of both groups discussed and debated the problems of sleep and read the article “The keys to a better night’s sleep.”

Class ‘A’

The students of Class ‘A’ were assigned to participate in the whole class discussion. After the ‘pre-task’ stage the students shared their ideas telling their peers what kind of people they are (‘early bird’, ‘catnapper’, or ‘night owl’). Students discussed their daily activities and talked about the best time they could study for an exam, do something creative, something that requires concentration, etc.

Students of this class were very enthusiastic to talk and discuss things from their personal experience. They liked the activity where they had an opportunity to talk about themselves. Analyzing the closed-ended questionnaire (see Appendix1) that students filled out at the end of the lesson I came across the following results:

Seven students out of 10 present responded that they ‘strongly agreed’ that the task was interesting; nine students (out of 10) marked ‘agree’ that they can use the knowledge gained during the lesson outside the classroom, and six students (out of 10) marked ‘strongly agree’ that they enjoyed working in whole class discussions.

Class ‘B’

The students of this class completed the same task, by working in pairs. They were assigned to accomplish a chart marking the best time for them to (study for an exam, do something creative, or something that requires concentration, etc) and then compare their answers with a partner. While dealing with this task student asked questions of a personal character to elicit answers from their peers. This kind of negotiation of meaning and sharing ideas gave an equal chance for each person of the pair to talk and participate in activity. In the following example, you can see two students’ conversation on one of the topics listed above:

1. Example:

S1: I always wake up very early in the mornings to get everything ready for my kids and husband, so I can say I am an ‘early bird’. And what about you? Do you get up early?

S2: Uh, (smiles) I do not need to get up so early, fortunately, I am not married! I get up around 10 a.m.

S1: It’s good, but when should you get to your office?

S2: My working hours are very convenient for a person like me, I am a ‘night owl’, you know. I get to my office at 11 and come back whenever I finish my duties; sometimes at 8 or even 10 p.m. So I can sleep longer in the mornings.

S1: It sounds fine, but not for me.

This example, can serve to illustrate how important meaning negotiation skills are for facilitating comprehensible input. While interacting in the dialogue students talk about their usual daily activities forgetting that this was just a lesson. The students’ behavior is very natural in this kind of task/activity. The following strands of data support this observation:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 7 students out of 9 ‘strongly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 6 students (out of 9) ‘strongly agree’, 2 students (out of 9) ‘agree’

‘I enjoyed working in pairs while completing the task’ – 8 students (out of 9) ‘agree’.

As it can be seen from the questionnaires filled out by participants the majority of the students from both groups were very positive about the task and found that they gained necessary information to be used outside the classroom setting. Students were also positive about class organization. They liked both whole class discussions and pair work. In both cases, students were provided with the opportunity to talk, express their opinions and share their experiences. This kind of task/activity introduced students to a set of new words and expressions that are useful not only in completing the tasks in the classroom but also in communicating with people in ‘real-life’ situations.

4.2.2. Second Day of the Study

On this day, students continued working on the topic “Day and night” and were provided with a new text “The mystery of sleep” as a ‘pretask’ stage. Students were assigned to read the text individually and ask questions for clarification. Then the teacher-researcher distributed handouts for students to work with.

Class ‘A’

While completing the task, students of this class were assigned to work individually. Students had to work on an activity where they had to reach a decision. The activity was based on a set of data given to the learners in the text and also on information already known by the learners (from their life experience). Working individually took students more time than was assigned at the beginning. Based on my field-notes it was evident that students were not so enthusiastic about the task.

Contrary to what I had recorded in my field notes, the data from the close-ended questionnaire appears to suggest that the students were enthusiastic about the task:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 5 students out of 9 ‘strongly agree, 3 students – ‘partly agree’, 1 student- ‘disagree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 6 students (out of 9) ‘agree’, 3 students ‘partly agree’

‘I enjoyed working individually while completing the task’ – 6 students ‘partly agree’; 2 students ‘disagree’; 1 student (out of 9) – ‘agree’.

Class ‘B’

While completing the same task, the students of this class were assigned to work in groups. Twelve students were present in the class and were divided into four groups, each of which consisted of three participants. Students completed the task actively negotiating with each other, the decisions were reached very soon and they managed to finish the task earlier than was required.

According to the questionnaire, it was evident that the majority of students liked the task and enjoyed working in groups:

‘This task was interesting for me’ –1 student – ‘strongly agree’, 10 students out of 12 ‘agree’, 2 students- ‘partly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – All 12 students ‘agree’

‘I enjoyed working in groups while completing the task’ – 8 students ‘agree’; 2 students ‘partly agree’; 1 student – ‘disagree’.

4.2.3. Third Day of the Study

The task for the day was based on a “Generation gap” topic that discussed the problems occurring between parents and their children. As a ‘pretask’ activity, students of both classes read the article “Upside- Down families”. After reading the text, students of the two classes

were discussing the article comparing the ideas of the author with their own and working on various types of activities like opinion gap and problem solving.

Class ‘A’

The students of this class were assigned to work in groups. While completing the task ten students were present, so the teacher divided them into 3 groups, two groups of 3 students and one group of 4. All the students were engaged in discussions and while completing the task they were sharing their opinions and reasons on a social issue as well as introducing a lot of relevant information to arrive at a solution.

The analysis of the closed-ended questionnaire is as follows:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 2 students- (out of 10) ‘strongly agree’, 5 students ‘agree’, 3 students- ‘partly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom –1 student (out of 10) - ‘strongly agree’, 9 students- ‘agree’,

‘I enjoyed working in groups while completing the task’ – 7 students (out of 10) ‘agree’; 2 students ‘partly agree’; 1 student – ‘disagree’.

Class ‘B’

While completing the same task the seven students in this class appeared to signal the same types of behavior. They started activity working in pairs; they were divided into three pairs and one of the students worked with me.

After analyzing the questionnaire, I concluded that almost all students were interested in the task and found that the content of the task addressed their needs. The following data strands from the questionnaire support my observation:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 7 students out of 7 ‘strongly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 2 students (out of 10) - ‘strongly agree’, 5 students – ‘agree’

‘I enjoyed working in pairs while completing the task’ – 1 student – (out of 7)-‘strongly agree’, 4 students ‘agree’; 2 students ‘partly agree’.

4.2.4. Fourth Day of the Study

The following task was based on the topic “The wisdom of age”. Dealing with that task, students had to acquire ‘would have to’, ‘should have’ and ‘ought to have’ expressions referring to the past, talk about values and traits of character; express regrets about the past and give advice to others on getting the most out of life. Again, both classes eagerly participated in discussions concerning their life experience; after that, students of both classes were assigned to work individually. The reason why I did not divide students into groups or pairs was that the task/activity they had to work on was of a personal nature and, in order to facilitate students to share their own thoughts and ideas, they were encouraged to work individually. Students were provided with a text “If I had my life to live over” as a ‘pretask’ activity and were asked to write a similar passage describing and expressing regrets about their past. All students liked the idea of working individually on that particular task.

After reading and analyzing students’ responses, I could see that they were very honest and shared their personal secrets with me. The following data strands can serve to illustrate the issues that are in focus:

Class ‘A’

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 7 students out of 7 ‘strongly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom –1 student (out of 7) - ‘strongly agree’, 6 students ‘agree’,

‘I enjoyed working individually while completing the task’ – 7 students ‘agree’.

Class ‘B’

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 6 students out of 9 ‘strongly agree’, 2 students – ‘agree’, 1 student- ‘disagree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom –5 students ‘agree’, 1 student- ‘partly agree’, 3 students ‘disagree’

‘I enjoyed working individually while completing the task’ – 9 students ‘agree’.

Working on this topic students were exposed to an imagination-gap type of task/activity. All students were provided with the same input (the text) and could respond and share their own ideas dealing with the task. As the task had to be conducted individually, students got the opportunity to exchange their ideas with the teacher-researcher with the help of writing.

4.2.5. Fifth Day of the Study

The task used on the fifth day of my study was based on the topic “Pollution”. As a ‘pretask’ stage students were provided with the article “Traffic pollution damages kids’ lungs” by Sean Banville from [www.breaking news English.com](http://www.breakingnews.com) (no date).

After reading the article students engaged in an opinion-gap task/activity type where they had to express their opinions concerning a social issue like traffic pollution; and decision-making/problem-solving task where students had to introduce their solution to the problem of pollution in the area where they lived.

Now I am going to introduce you to how students of the two classes dealt with that task:

Class’ A’

Eleven students participated in the task fulfillment. I divided students into three groups of three students and one group of two students. While completing the task students talked with each other deciding which of their ideas was the best solution for the problem stated in the article.

Having analyzed the questionnaire, I would like to point out the following results:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 10 students out of 11 ‘strongly agree’, 1 student – ‘agree’

'I'll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 2 students (out of 11) - 'strongly agree', 7 students 'agree', 2 students – 'partly agree'

'I enjoyed working in groups while completing the task' – 11 students 'agree'.

Class 'B'

Ten students were present during the task fulfillment. Students were asked to work in pairs and were divided into 5 pairs. The students of this class, like the students of previous one, were actively negotiating with each other trying to find solutions to the issue.

'This task was interesting for me' – 10 students out of 10 'strongly agree'

'I'll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 6 students 'agree', 2 students – 'partly agree', 2 students – 'disagree'

'I enjoyed working in pairs while completing the task' – 8 students 'agree', 2 students – 'partly agree'.

Having analyzed students' responses I came to this conclusion: the majority of the students found the task useful and interesting; they liked working with their peers and were very sensitive about the problems of pollution.

4.2.6. Sixth Day of the Study

This particular task required students to produce/demonstrate their creativity and imagination. In an imagination-gap task/activity students were asked to interview various historical figures.

Class 'A'

In this class students were assigned to work in pairs on the topic "Interview a Historical Person" where they had to ask questions various famous people; there were eight students present in the class, so they were divided into four pairs. As a 'pretask' stage, students were provided with an example that they could use as a prompt. However, almost all students of this

class misunderstood the requirement and instead of interviewing historical people, they addressed their questions to various actors and modern pop stars.

For quite a long time students had difficulties to think of a person or a question they wanted to ask.

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 6 students out of 8 ‘strongly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 8 students – ‘disagree’

‘I enjoyed working in pairs while completing the task’ – 1 student (out of 8) – ‘partly agree’. 7 students - ‘disagree’.

Having analyzed the results of the questionnaire, I surmised that students failed to complete the task as it was not relevant to their needs (judging from the teacher-researcher field notes), they did not think they could have a chance or opportunity to speak with someone famous or ask him/her a question.

Class ‘B’

The students of this class were assigned to work individually. There were 11 students present at the class. Having analyzed the results of the task and questionnaire, I came across an extremely different picture. All the 11 students completed the task as was explained in the instructions, addressing very creative questions to various historical people like Napoleon, Albert Einstein, Tigran the Great, etc. Each student responded that he/she finds the task interesting and relevant to his or her needs; ten students stated that they would be able to use the knowledge gained outside the classroom; and seven students enjoyed working individually.

Taking into consideration the huge difference between the answers given by the two classes, I wish to point out that students from class ‘B’ were more positive about the task as they came from a very different background and educational level as well as having more life experience as all of them are adults.

4.2.7. Seventh Day of the Study

The task for the seventh day of my investigation was based on the topic “The art of complaining”. The lesson was audiotaped (for a partial transcript of the lesson see Appendix 4). While completing the task, students were required to negotiate with each other, discuss and describe their everyday irritations, personal style of complaining, responding to complaints, identifying problems and offering solutions.

Class ‘A’

Seven students were present on the day of this task fulfillment. As a ‘pretask’ stage students told their stories from their life about things that bothered and annoyed them, as well as sharing with each other how they complained in such situations. The teacher-researcher divided students into two groups of three and four students. In their groups students thought of imaginary situations where they had to say how they would respond and behave.

Having analyzed the questionnaire, I believe that the gleanings of data presented below might offer some explanations for the discussion in progress:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 7 students ‘strongly agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 6 students – ‘agree’, 1 student – ‘disagree’.

‘I enjoyed working in groups while completing the task’ – 5 students ‘agree’, 1 student – ‘partly agree’ and 1 student ‘disagree’.

Class ‘B’

While completing the same task, students of this group were asked to participate in whole class discussion (for a partial lesson observation look at the field notes Appendix 5). Students enjoyed the task but were rather ashamed of talking about themselves regarding the kind of complainers they were. After some time, students were already actively involved in the process of completing the task and behaved very naturally addressing the questions even to their teacher and teacher-researcher (for a partial transcript of the lesson see Appendix 4).

The data strands shown below can help explain the point under examination:

‘This task was interesting for me’ – 9 students out of 11 ‘strongly agree’, 2 students ‘agree’

‘I’ll be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom – 8 students – ‘strongly agree’, 2 students ‘agree’, 1 student ‘partly agree’.

‘I enjoyed working in whole class discussion while completing the task’ – 6 students ‘strongly agree’, 2 students – ‘agree’ and 3 students ‘partly agree’.

The data analyzed in this section serves to illustrate that the majority of the students who participated in filling out the close-ended questionnaires responded in a highly positive manner about the task types and the content of the tasks. According to the students’ opinions, all the tasks used in the study addressed their interests (in one exception – Day 6, Class A) and were helpful for use outside the classroom.

4.3. Open-ended Questionnaire Filled out by Students

The open-ended questionnaire was designed to investigate what kind of tasks/activities used in the study motivated students' learning and what type of class organization was most beneficial for achieving better results and most effective for promoting communication. The open-ended questionnaire for students consisted of eight questions in English. Complete anonymity was assured. Twenty-one students participated in filling out the questionnaires: nine students from class 'A' and twelve students from class 'B'

According to the results of the open-ended questionnaire the answers given to the first question ("Do you think that the classroom tasks and activities you accomplished during the study could help you to communicate in real life situations? If 'yes' how? If 'no' Why?"), were very positive. All twenty-one students responded that the tasks and activities were very helpful and useful in developing their language abilities.

The responses to the second question ("Did you have a chance to express your opinions and ideas while completing the tasks and activities during the study?"), indicated that the 18 students (out of 21) had a chance to express their own ideas while completing the tasks/activities; three students thought that they did not always have a chance to express their ideas.

The responses to the next question ("Did you find the tasks/activities used in the course interesting or boring for you? If 'yes' why? If 'no' why?"), can help illustrate the following: 19 students (out of 21) found the tasks/activities very interesting. (E.g. "They are interesting because we discussed things from our life."); the two other students answered that not all tasks were interesting for them.

The responses to the fourth question ("What do you think about the activities based on reading materials (reading about pollution, about problems between generations, the story about the woman who wished to change her life, etc)? Were they useful tasks?"), support the following statement:

17 students found that the tasks/activities based on reading materials were useful. (E. g. “I think they were useful, because there were things about which we sometimes forget. They are important for our lives and should be discussed.)

The responses to the fifth question (“What kind of learning was more effective for you?” Individual learning, pair work, group work) explain the following:

12 students found ‘pair work’ to be more effective; 6 students answered that ‘group work’ was more effective, and 3 students answered that ‘individual learning’ was more effective learning for them.

The results of the sixth question (“Which type of learning activities required more interaction? Why?” Whole class discussions, pair, group work) are as follows:

11 students answered ‘whole class discussions’; 7 students ‘pair work’; and 2 students ‘group work’

The results of the seventh question (“What kind of activities would you prefer to have more of? Why?” Individual learning, pair work, group work, whole class discussion) suggest that:

8 students answered - whole class discussion; 5 students – individual work; 5 students –pair work; & 3 students – group work.

The results of analysis based on the eighth question (What is your opinion about collaborative work? Can it improve your learning?), can serve to explain the following:

all 21 students responded that collaborative work is one of the best ways to improve their learning.

Thus, according to the data gathered with the help of the open-ended questionnaire, it could be pointed out that all task types used during the study were interesting, useful and pedagogically effective for the students. The open-ended questionnaire served to demonstrate that learners emphasized the role of pair and group work to be valuable learning activity, and the majority of the students participating in the study considered the whole class discussions as a more preferable kind of activity. This perhaps reflects the type of classroom interaction they have been most accustomed to in all their prior schooling. Whereas pair work and group work are new learning experiences for most of them.

4.4. Open-ended Questionnaire Filled out by Teachers

As I had used the open-ended questionnaire for teachers in the final stage of the study, it was not possible to focus on it earlier. The open-ended questionnaire designed for teachers was created to discover the teachers' attitude toward Task-based Language Learning/Teaching. The questionnaire was designed to discover whether the TBT approach could develop better performance on the part of students and to investigate if a particular type of class organization like group/pair work, individual or whole class discussions were more beneficial for achieving better results and effective for promoting communication as well as what kind of tasks/activities used in the study motivated students' learning. The open-ended questionnaire for teachers consisted of seven questions, again in English. All teachers who participated in the study had graduated from the American University of Armenia and had received a CTEFL (Certificate in Teaching English as Foreign Language) and MA TEFL (Masters of Art in Teaching English as Foreign Language). Some of the teachers had about 5-7 years of teaching experience, some of them had more than 10 years.

According to the teachers who filled out the questionnaire, the task-based language teaching and learning approach could develop an EFL students' classroom performance. The responses to the question concerning the students' attitudes toward traditional classroom teaching provided us with the following data. Not all students in ordinary public schools had been exposed to non-traditional teaching approaches, so they could not express their opinions about classroom situations, but those of the learners who had got used to, for instance, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), preferred it to traditional classroom teaching.

This statement could be supported also by the responses given to the question concerning the students' motivation while implementing a task-based approach: the majority of teachers indicated that they could observe how students' motivation increased while dealing with the tasks/activities that related to the 'real-life' situations.

According to the data provided by the responses to the question:

“What kind of learning do students prefer more?” It could be pointed out that the teachers believed most of the students have a preference for pair and group work learning.

Consequently, having analyzed the data gathered through the open-ended questionnaire filled out by the teachers, I came to the following conclusion. The use of task-based teaching approach and the implementation of tasks that engage students’ active participation and connect them with the ‘real-world’ of the language they learned stimulated and motivated their learning. While involved in the completion of such tasks, the students performed naturally, which in turn increased their confidence and motivation.

4.5. Conclusion

The instruments used in the study and the data collected as a result appear to support my belief that a task-based approach to EFL might offer numerous benefits to Armenian EFL learners. However, I understand that the outcomes of this study could be considered valid only in the contextual setting in which it has occurred. Therefore, I am confident in stating that the approach examined in this investigation could only offer context-based confirmation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Summary

The study investigated the role of the task-based teaching approach in learning English as a foreign language and various task types for motivating and stimulating the language learning process. The secondary aim of the research was to find out whether the difference of the task outcomes depended on the fact that those tasks were carried out in pairs, groups, individually, or in whole class discussions.

The participants of my study were six English language teachers and twenty-one fifth level students at the American University of Armenia taking “General English” courses in the Extension Division. In order to collect, analyze and interpret data and answer my research questions, I conducted my study using two groups at the same level.

The study included seven topics with various pre-, during and post-tasks/activities that had to be maintained through different types of class organization. All tasks and topics were taken from a variety of teaching sources and were adapted to the level and needs of the participants. In this research four pair-work, four group-work, three individual and two whole-class discussions were examined in order to investigate how various task types and different ways of class organization might influence the students’ performance and participation during the lessons.

The main findings of the research were based on the implementation of various task/activity types: problem solving, decision making, imagination gap, opinion gap, etc; the close-ended questionnaires filled out by students at the end of every lesson, open-ended questionnaire designed for both students and teachers; and teacher-researcher field notes.

The findings of the study addressing the issues of types of class organization suggested that teachers considered pair- and group-work were considered the most efficient class situations to promote language teaching and learning, although the majority of the students still preferred whole class discussion.

According to the results provided by both teachers and students, task types that were introduced in the task-based teaching encouraged and stimulated learners to develop their communicative strategies necessary for out of class interactions.

The data strands provided by the study turned to be very helpful in illustrating and explaining the questions set by the research. The results of the data analysis supported my belief that a task-based teaching approach could provide a significant contribution to the Armenian educational system. There are many schools in Armenia where teachers might effectively use the results of this investigation to make their teaching more successful. The findings of the study might help teachers to provide learners with a variety of learning tasks and instructions that will give an opportunity to involve learner in communicative, creative and cognitively challenging ways of learning.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

The following two sections will address the issues concerning the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

In spite of the fact that my study can provide a significant contribution to EFL teaching methodology and learning approaches in the Armenian educational system, the study does not avoid certain limitations. These limitations mainly relate to the issues of the availability of resources necessary to conduct the research, the time and setting where the study has been conducted.

The most serious issue concerning the resources was that contrary to my intentions I was not able to adopt various tools to provide more meaningful and authentic input for the learners. Unfortunately, I could not set the tasks that had to be maintained in places outside of the University. While completing those tasks the students who worked in another more realistic situations could benefit from those tasks/activities. I could not manage to use video materials to engage the students in completing more interesting tasks and computer equipment to organize various presentations and discussions that could enrich the students' performance and enhance their motivation.

The limitation concerning the time constraints of the study led me to face the problem where I was not able to introduce the students to a variety of task/activity types as well as give them more opportunities to perform and process the tasks through various ways of classroom learning.

Another limitation concerns the setting where I conducted my study (American University of Armenia). It would have been preferable if I had had an opportunity to carry out my investigation in the public schools of Armenia. In that case, I would have been able to introduce a task-based teaching approach to a wider number of learners and teachers. However, this issue could not be resolved due to the lack of time. I had to use classes and teachers available to me at the time I had to do the study.

In light of this, I would appreciate it if other researchers who would like to test out and implement innovative ways of teaching/learning would take all these limitations listed above into consideration and try to benefit from them when carrying out further research in this area.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

Keeping in mind the contributions and limitations of my study, I would like to suggest to my readership as well as all future researchers of the field to take into consideration the following points.

First, it is important to set an appropriate time for conducting a valid investigation. I would like to advise all future researchers to involve more students of various levels to participate in the study, as it can provide them with the opportunity to try out the tasks/activities and different types of class organization with a broader audience, and to find out which tasks/activities and class organization types work better. In my study, I was able to use pair/group work, individual learning and whole class discussions only a limited number of times, which, of course could not serve to illustrate all the issues and benefits that might occur while implementing the task-based approach.

Another strong suggestion for future researchers is that it is necessary to plan carefully all stages of the lesson process. It is very important to provide learners with more meaningful input as a pre-, during- and post-tasks/activities helpful to elicit a better outcome.

Consideration of all my suggestions stated above for future research in this field will help any investigator address and improve issues illustrated in my study, as well as realize a more reliable, useful and significant study. I believe that current and future studies will contribute to the EFL teaching methodology and learning in the Armenian educational system.

In order to develop a more definite picture of what can or what should happen in an Armenian EFL setting, we need to engage teachers in well-informed inquiries on a continuum basis. This would necessitate a fostering of values and belief systems in our language teachers that can compliment our research aspirations. In this respect, the following lines from T. S. Eliot's (1936, p.42) *Choruses from the Rock* echo the values and belief systems that have underpinned my investigation:

*The endless cycle of idea and action, Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not for
silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.*

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APPENDIX 1

Close-ended questionnaire

Instructions: Circle one response for each item.

| QUESTIONS | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Partly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|--------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. This task was interesting for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The content of this task addressed my interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I will be able to use the things I learned in this task outside the classroom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I enjoyed working in group, pair, individually, whole class discussion while completing the task | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This task was difficult for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I had the skills to complete this task | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

APPENDIX 2

Open-ended questionnaire for students

The following questionnaire will be used in my MA thesis research work at the American University of Armenia. I would very much appreciate it if you take a few minutes of your time to fill it out. Complete anonymity is assured. Thank you for your help.

1. Do you think that the classroom tasks and activities you accomplished during the study could help you to communicate in real life situation? If 'yes' how? If 'no' Why?
2. Did you have a chance to express your opinions and ideas while completing the tasks and activities during the study?
3. Did you find the tasks/activities used in the course interesting or boring for you? If 'yes' why? If 'no' why?
4. What do you think about the activities based on reading materials (reading about pollution, about problems between generations, the story about the woman who wished to change her life, etc)? Were they useful tasks?
5. What kind of learning was more effective for you?
 - Individual learning
 - Pair work
 - Group work
6. Which type of learning activities required more interaction? Why?
 - Whole class discussions
 - Pair
 - Group work
7. What kind of activities would you prefer to have more of? Why?
 - Individual learning
 - Pair work
 - Group work
 - Whole class discussion
8. What is your opinion about collaborative work? Can it improve your learning?

*** As the students never asked to respond or answer questions in Armenian I decided to ask all questions only in English.

APPENDIX 3

Open-ended questionnaire for teachers

The following questionnaire will be used in my MA thesis research work at the American University of Armenia. I would very much appreciate it if you take a few minutes of your time to fill it out. Thank you for your help.

Personal information:

- Name _____
- Gender _____
- Education/background: Armenian Russian English Other _____
- Teaching experience _____ years

1. What is your opinion about Task-based Language Learning and Teaching? Can this approach develop an EFL students' classroom performance?
2. What do the students think about classic/traditional classroom situations in which only a limited number of tasks are used?
3. What do your students think about TBT approach?
4. What kind of learning do the students prefer (TBT or classic lessons)?
5. To what extent are the students motivated by the changes in their classrooms after TBT approach has been implemented?
6. What kind of tasks/activities do the students like better?
7. What kind of learning do students prefer more?
 - Individual learning
 - Pair work
 - Group work
 - Whole class discussion

APPENDIX 4

Transcript Sample of Audio Recorded Data

****Class 'A'

Task: “The art of complaining”

Teacher: How often do you complain, in what situations, and what type of complainers are you?

Na: I don't know, I complain every time when something bothers or annoys me. I think I'm an activist.

Teacher: Can you bring an example, tell some situations when you had to complain?

Ar: Yes, two days ago I was at the cinema with my friends and there were some boys sitting in front of us, one of them was talking on the mobile phone very loudly for a long time. That annoyed me and almost everyone who were sitting around, I asked him to stop, but he never did. I was very nervous during the whole film. May be I am a calm, collected type.

Teacher: Yes, terrible situation. Can someone else share with his or her experience?

Va: I am a fighter. I always complain in situations when I see a pregnant woman in a crowded bus and young people who never offer their sits to a woman.

Teacher: It is very nice of you. Who else wants to speak?

Ti: I am a silent suffer and try not to complain.

Ho: I complain when I see someone littering in the parks or in the streets. That really annoys me, I think I am an activist.

*** Class 'B'

Teacher: What kind of complainer are you, Zara?

Za: I always complain if I really have to. I am an activist.

Lu: I am a silent complainer. I suffer but never complain.

Ru: I am a fighter. Even if I have a slight opportunity, I complain.

Teacher: Who else is a fighter? Sarkis, what type of complainer are you?

Sa: I don't know. It depend on the situation.

Teacher: Do you complain if something is wrong, unfair or unjust for you?

Sa: Yes, I think I am not a fighter, but sometimes I complain.

Nu: I am something in between an activist and a collected type.

Ka: I think I am an activist. I always complain when I see people who are standing in the line suddenly decide to move forward without paying any attention to the others.

*** *In order to preserve the authenticity of the responses/ patterns of talk as they occurred in the classes, I have presented them here in their original form.*

APPENDIX 5

Sample of field-notes made during the class observation

Class 'B'

11 students are present.

Teacher asks students to have a whole class discussion telling what kind of complainers they are. Students enjoy the task, but feel a little embarrassed to talk. Only when the teacher asks direct questions and addresses the students by their names they start speaking.

Teacher notices that she needs to direct student participation starts telling about herself.

One of the students brings example telling a story from her own experience and explaining others what kind of complainer she is. Students get involved in active participation.