

Vol. 6, Issue-1  
February 2015

ISSN: 0976-8165

# The Criterion

An International Journal in English



*6th Year of Open Access*

Poetry | Fiction | Research Papers | Author Interviews | Book Reviews

**Chief Editor**  
Dr. Vishwanath Bite

**Managing Editor**  
Madhuri Bite

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>

## **The Effect of Using Task-Based Learning Activities in Teaching Academic Writing to Engineering Students**

**Prativa Rani Saha  
&**

**S. Kanchana**

Assistant Professors

VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering & Technology, Hyderabad.

### **Abstract:**

Task-based language teaching is a learner-centered process that promotes the shift from teacher centric to learner centric. The present paper aims to evaluate the influence of task based learning strategies on students in writing and how their writing skills develop through task based activities. Task based activities as a learning method help students to write independently and improve their writing competence. Task Based Method gives chance to students to explore their ideas, choose their own words, share their ideas and encourage them to be active learners. Here, the teacher has a lot of opportunities to develop various activities. This approach is successful for language learning because learners learn best by doing. This ultimately benefits learners because they will experience the language item in interaction with other closely related grammatical discourse elements.

**Keywords: Task-based Instruction, Writing Task, Learning Outcomes.**

### **Introduction**

Writing is perhaps the most complex language skill. Unlike speaking, reading, and listening, writing involves more formal language training than any other skill. It needs the ability to correctly sequence grammatical and lexical structures in written form and to present ideas precisely. Writing has become very important in everyday life and everyone has to master this skill. Writing is an important and, at the same time, demanding activity, particularly in a foreign language context in which learners are exposed to language just for few hours a week (Kim & Kim, 2005).

According to (Yang, 1995; Cook, 2000) task is defined as “A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. Task-based language teaching facilitates language learning with student involvement as students get an opportunity to use language and practice naturally. They use language for a specific outcome. As teachers we may use different tasks in a classroom. Here, they brainstorm on a given topic, use free writing techniques, share their ideas, organize their ideas, check for grammatical accuracy and complete the task.

The objective of this paper is to present how task based activities have helped students' in improving their academic writing. It discusses how task based activities prove to be effective with the students' wholehearted participation. The involvement of students in the task-based activities definitely enhances their writing. For example, while teaching Report Writing to my Engineering students I have used Model based Teaching, Think Pair & Share, Discussion and Presentation methods which have proved to be useful. As task based method requires three phases such as Pre-task stage, while-task stage and post-task stage that we have to use in a classroom as language teachers.

The first phase is the 'pre-task' that deals with the various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they undertake the task, such as whether students are given time to plan the performance of the task, they should analyze their audience, they should understand the scope of the topic etc. The second phase is the 'while task' phase that deals with the task itself and includes the methods of brainstorming, free writing, clustering, organizing, analyzing, sequencing etc. The final phase is 'post-task' phase and includes follow ups with a presentation etc.

The present paper highlights on two topics dealt in the classroom through task based activities. For teaching Job Application and Report Writing, Model Based Method was used in the class. At first, the students were divided into a group of five members which comprised of a student with good language skill, so that he can help his team members with correct sentence construction etc. Then a sample Report was given to them and they were asked to identify each component in the report. Next they were asked to analyze what each component contains. Later, they were asked to discuss on this within their group and answer these questions. The students were able to identify some of the components of a report, write their heading and sub-heading, understand what each component includes and present on it before the class. The activity was successful as they were able to understand the report properly, observe the choice of words for a report, format etc. Finally, they were able to write a report on their own.

The second topic was Job Application, where again a sample letter was given to students and followed brainstorming, free writing techniques. Then the students discussed the components of a job application letter, the vocabulary to be used etc., and were able to write a letter. The method was very successful and they were able to write a letter very effectively. The tasks and learning opportunities are given in the table below.

Each task will be organized in the following way:

- Pre-task activity will be an introduction to the topic and task
- Task cycle: Task > Planning > Discussion
- Language Focus and Feedback

**A tabular presentation of the tasks and the learning opportunities created:**

<b>Topic Covered</b>	<b>Pre-Task Phase</b>	<b>While-Task Phase</b>	<b>Post-Task Phase</b>	<b>Observations and opportunities created</b>
<b>Report Writing and Job Application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing audience</li> <li>• Determining Scope</li> <li>• Asking for desired action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying headings and sub-headings.</li> <li>• Identifying format and components,</li> <li>• Looking for important words.</li> <li>• Discussion and Writing Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on group presentation and evaluation of report writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative thinking &amp; designing ability</li> <li>• Organization of ideas</li> <li>• Grammar &amp; Sentence Construction</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Time Management</li> </ul>

**Conclusion**

Nunan [23] defines a task based language learning as "an approach which seeks to allow students to work somewhat at their own pace and within their own level and area of interest to process and restructure their inter language. It moves away from a prescribed developmental sequence and introduces learner freedom and autonomy into the learning process. The teacher's role is also modified to that of helper. It has proved true while dealing with the above two topics where the students were given time and were left to work on their own, understand the concept, its real life importance and draft as per the situation. The students were creative and tried to work on their own. Such activities help them to infer, interrogate, analyze and interpret. At the end the students were had a peer review session where their peers have given feedback that was more effective.

**Works Cited:**

- *Task Based language Teaching*, David Nunan.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (Second Edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. (1996). *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom*. Prentice Hall.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning Teaching*. Macmillan.
- Willis, D. & Willis, J. (2007), *Doing Task-based Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for task-based learning*. Harlow: U.K. Longman Addison-Wesley.