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**基于建构主义学习理论的“基础英语”任务型教学研究**

**摘 要：**基础英语对英语专业学生来说是一门十分重要的基础必修课程。诸多研究已经证明任务型教学对英语教学至关重要。尽管中外学术界对此已有众多研究，但该领域仍有足够的探索空间。本研究旨在于建构主义学习理论视角下对英语专业基础英语课程任务型教学的应用进行具体分析，同时，通过问卷调查和实证分析以发现任务型教学在基础英语课堂中应用时的优点和存在问题。研究结果表明：任务型教学能有效促进基础英语的学习，并提升学生对英语学习的兴趣。最后本研究还将提供一些对基础英语教学的建议和可能的措施。

**关键词：**英语专业；基础英语；任务型教学；建构主义学习理论

**Task-based Language Teaching of Basic English Course Based on Constructive Learning Theory**

**Abstract:** Basic English is a significantly important basic compulsory course for all English majors. A large body of studies have proved that task-based language teaching is essential to English teaching. Although plentiful studies have been done both at home and abroad, there is still enough room for further exploration. By conducting a questionnaire investigation and basing on constructive learning theory, this research aims to discuss the advantages and existing problems in it. The result confirms that task-based language teaching indeed facilitates the basic English learning and arouses students’ interest in English learning as well. According to the results of this research, some suggestions and possible measures of Basic English teaching are to be offered.

**Key words:** English major; Basic English; task-based language teaching; constructive learning theory

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**Task-based Language Teaching of Basic English Course Based on Constructive Learning Theory**

# 1. Introduction

## Basic English is a compulsory course for English majors for higher education in China which pays much emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, discourse and culture, as well as training students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and other basic skills.

## 1.1 Importance of Basic English Learning

There is no doubt that the 21st century is an internationalized knowledge and economy era which implies that the society has set higher requirements of both demand and quality of English professionals. The current *Syllabus of English Education for English Majors of Institutions of Higher Learning* issued in 2000 states that English majors are required to possess solid English basic skills, broad knowledge perspective, relevant professional knowledge, strong practical ability and high quality. Besides, the primary task of English teaching is to train basic language skills (Adviser of the Committee of English Education for English Majors of institutions of High Learning, 2000).

Basic English occupies the longest teaching time and the most credits (Chang & Jin, 2012). All above indicate directly or indirectly that basic English learning is so important for English learning. Indeed, only ramming up the foundation, can study in the more professional senior will be easier.

## 1.2 Current Situation of Basic English Teaching for English Majors

First of all, the problem that English majors do not master basic English skills solid enough is more and more prominent. Students tend to lack advanced vocabulary, fast reading ability, and be week in speaking and writing. But majority of Basic English courses have segmented the basic English skills too overmuch, emphasizing micro-skills training unduly. Language ability cultivation is divided into several aspects rather than involving in comprehensive training in the context of discourse. What’s more, many teachers do not realize the comprehensive ability of using language is not simply the sum of micro-skills, and thus it leads to the imbalance in language skills development.

Secondly, the teaching goal for English majors is to foster comprehensive English professionals who have a good command of basic skills and extensive cultural knowledge, and they can communicate with others expertly in real world (Adviser of the Committee of English Education for English Majors of institutions of High Learning, 2000). However, the course provided and the teaching content are short of practicality in most cases. What is worse, many teachers ignore the development of communicative competence and fail to motivate students to use English in real communication.

Last but not least, the simplification of English teaching mode makes students lose interest and motivation in English learning. The traditional teaching modes deprive students of the opportunity to use language and the habit of creative thinking in a way which indulge their indolence and dependence at the same time (Zuo, 2014). And plenty of students lack the consciousness of autonomous learning which totally goes against the development of comprehensive English competence. Obviously, there are many problems need to be solved urgently.

## 1.3 Purpose of Research

Basic English is of great importance for English majors and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT hereafter) has been a significant research area in English teaching. Plenty of studies have conducted on this topic both in theory and practice, at home and abroad. However, there is still much room for further study. In order to solve the problem of theory localization and build a better Basic English teaching, the coming research will focus on analyzing the application of TBLT in Basic English course for English majors from constructive learning theory mainly and input hypothesis on the basis of previous studies. It will involve a questionnaire survey for English majors in Hangzhou College of Commerce to assure the result authenticity. With practical investigation and the application of theories, the analysis will have deep interpretation on the TBLT applied in Basic English course including the advantages and existing problems. In the end of the thesis, there are some pertinent suggestions.

# 2. Literature Review

TBLT is originated from Prabhu’s ‘the Bangalore Project’ (1987) in which he designed various types of communicative tasks and advocated students to learn knowledge by completing tasks. Although scholars at that time had mixed comments on the result of the project, it reflects the progress of education for the project objects to traditional syllabus and linguistic form centered teaching mode. Since then, many scholars continue to study the language teaching and lots of related studies on TBLT appears.

## 2.1 Previous Studies on TBLT

TBLT has been studied by many scholars both at home and abroad until now and the studies covers its origin, development and application in practical classes, as well as its features and deficiencies.

## 2.1.1 Studies on TBLT Abroad

TBLT, as the name implies, task is the essence. But the task here is not the same as it in daily life. Ellis states that a task generally has four key characteristics. That is, a task involves a primary focus on pragmatic meaning, has some kind of ‘gap’, has a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome and the participants choose the linguistic resources needed to complete the task (Ellis, 2003:185). Tasks meet students’ needs to communicate in real world and have close relations to social life. They are sequenced according to difficulty degree and one task with another is connected tightly just as language form and function depend on each other. Students first learn the language form and then to use it in task activities. Namely they learn the communicative function of language. In short, tasks are always involved in communicative activities which exactly conform to the idea “learning by doing” (qtd. in Ferguson, 2003) and learner-centered classroom. All these can be concluded as the authenticity principle, form-function principle, task dependency principle and learning by doing (Nunan, 1989).

Besides, how to carry out tasks in the classroom is important as well. Willis (1996) gives a specific explanation of organizing TBLT classroom: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. In pre-task phase, teachers lead in tasks and clear topics to help students recall or learn some vocabularies and phrases necessary to complete the following tasks. This part motivates students’ interest on some level. Task cycle contains tasks performing, planning and reporting. Students usually work in pairs or groups to complete tasks and in the meantime, they are exposed to lots of opportunities to get in touch with the real context of verbal or written language. Students discuss freely to exchange information and then display their results to the class. Teachers finally summarize the results and give advisable evaluations to students. Language focus covers analysis and practice which means that teachers organize some targeted exercises to emphasize the language knowledge, namely, the language form rather than the meaning.

TBLT popularizes gradually. Scholars put it into practice and problems appear at the same time. Rahimpour (2008) discusses three kinds of syllabuses: procedural syllabus, process syllabus and TBLT through classroom researches. And the result shows that TBLT approach tends to lose language accuracy compared to structural-based language teaching. It implies that teachers lay too much emphasis on language meaning but ignore the language form finally in most cases. Adapting TBLT in ways that are inconsistent with its theoretical underpinnings is common among some English as second or foreign language. But worse still, teachers are even likely to turn it into 3P (presentation-practice-production) mode (Plews & Zhao, 2010).

## 2.1.2 Studies on TBLT at Home

Over the past few years, TBLT has been applied in junior school, senior school, and college education gradually. Plenty of studies either in theory or practice are launched by researchers and teachers whose contents usually refer to basic skills in English teaching.

Generally, English skills cover the four basics listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as translation. Listening makes a stuffy and dull impression on students. For the sake of making students have a better command of English listening, the teacher Lu Yanhua (2014) tries to alter the traditional teaching mode, making students be the teaching subject. In pre-task preparation, Lu does some import work from the cultural background, vocabulary and skills. The second stage is mainly to cultivate students’ ability to predict the content of speech according to the speaker’s language, voice, tone and attitude, and grasp the discourse structure. The last stage is task development. Lu guides students to do language analysis including all kinds of exercises and fierce discussion. The result shows that TBLT exactly meet the needs and fits the listening class very well.

Another teacher Guo Wenqi (2016) applies TBLT in oral English class of vocational college. She makes a survey and gets some figures: After learning extracurricular tasks, the number of self-confident students increased by 34.5% and the proportion of students with strong interest in learning English increased by 32.8% (Guo, 2016). The data indicate that students’ active learning in TBLT class is much higher than that in previous and traditional teaching mode. Obviously, students prefer to fulfil tasks assigned by the teacher in TBLT class because in their eyes, tasks transfer from commands to interests and they have more opportunities to express themselves which makes them have a sense of accomplishment. Therefore, the learning efficiency is greatly improved. About writing, the main form of language output, majority of students hold a psychology of resistance, especially in English writing. Dong Zhenyi (2011) conducts a semester-long experimental study of English writing teaching in primary school with the application of task-based Approach. He operates the three phases of TBLT as well and, for the meantime, he applies some writing tasks such as picture depict writing, imitate writing. Students are motivated to open their thought and plan in mind while they are completing the tasks. TBLT seems to fit students’ all-round development if applied properly.

Since the TBLT comes into China, great progress has been made to some degree, but there still exists some insufficiency on its development and implementation in China. One main problem is the week consciousness of theory localization (Li, 2015). Many researchers study on the implementation of TBLT which mostly base on foreign research results. In other words, theoretical explorations neglect teaching practice in China or practical teaching investigations only pay attention to present situations, case analyses but lack of profound theoretical basis.

## 2.2 Constructive Learning Theory Applied in English Teaching

“Constructive is very practical to English learning” (Wang, 2003). In Wang’s study “The Constructive Learning Theory and English Situated-teaching”, he writes that English language learning is, in fact, a kind of ability learning for learners themselves choosing to assimilate, adapt and conform to the input information. And a new structure is formed through interaction and reconstruction of the new input materials and the existing information. That is, language acquisition is the result of the learners actively construction rather than passively acceptance. Because learners are exposed to language materials all the time, language acquisition becomes a continuous construction process.

Constructive learning theory not only focuses on students to learn knowledge and skills, but also pays much attention to cultivate students’ ability of life-long learning because its teaching goal is to inspire and foster students’ ability of autonomous learning, develop their capability of gathering information, processing information and solving problems. As a subject with practical application, the teaching design of English is suitable for the guidance of constructive learning theory. Up to now, Scaffolding Instruction, Anchored Instruction and Random Access Instruction are more mature in the formation of college English teaching under the theory of constructive learning paradigm (Cheng, 2017).

Constructive learning theory shows great vitality in area of foreign language teaching in China. It has been explored theoretically and implemented practically from all-round and multi-angle perspectives (Huang & Wang, 2007). Its application will benefit English teaching greatly for it requires teachers’ teaching mode corresponding to students’ learning environment and set students as the center.

# 3. Theoretical Basis

Two major theoretical bases of TBLT are Krashen’s second language acquisition theory and constructive theory. And comprehensible input in input hypothesis is a crucial part and process of language acquisition. Learners accept proper information input and construct knowledge themselves so that finally language acquisition is accomplished.

## 3.1 Krashen’s Input Hypothesis

 In Krashen’s input hypothesis, comprehensible language input lays a foundation for language acquisition. Comprehensible input means the target language that the learner would not be able to produce but still can understand (qtd. in Schütz, 2017). Mastery of language mainly depends on the language used in communication which is strongly encouraged in TBLT. Teacher’s responsibility is to expose students to the comprehensible language input as much as possible. Learners should put meaning in the priority position than form when acquire a second language. Structure acquisition happened when learner totally understand the items that were provided by others. “The more the learner inputs information (listening), the more likely he will be able to output (speaking)” (qtd. in Schütz, 2017). TBLT mode is demonstrated to create more favorable teaching conditions and facilitate second language acquisition better.

## 3.2 Constructive Learning Theory

Constructive learning theory experiences a long time of breeding, its creation can be traced back to the 1980s. Constructive theory merges Piaget theory of “self-construction” and Vygotsky theory of “social construction” together and then it forms “meaning construction” when it is applied to learning theory (Yang & Jia, 2011). Learning is an active process in which learners use sensory input and construct meaning out of it. It is not the passive acceptance of external knowledge, but the result caused by the interaction between learners and the outside world. Learning is a kind of social activity which is filled with conversation and information exchange. Besides, setting is an important element either in learning or acquisition which is also well stressed in TBLT (Hein, 1991). Vygotsky argues that concepts are internalized by learners when they are presented in a concrete material (as the input material in TBLT) way (Robinson, 2011). Constructive learning theory emphasizes that learners construct knowledge using their own activities in terms of the schemata that they have already developed. They believe that knowledge cannot be obtained by teachers’ teaching, but learners do meaning construction through learning necessary materials in certain situations which are usually set under the social and cultural background, with the help of teachers and partners. The four attributes of learning environment are “situation/ setting, collaboration, conversation and meaning construction”. In short, constructive learning theory takes the student as the center, pay attention to learners’ subjective initiative and the ability of autonomic learning, emphasizes the mutual learning, attaches great importance to the learning situation, the development of the individual, and cultivates learners’ ability to cooperate (Kang, 2017).

Following are four key opinions that constructive learning theory holds on teaching (Yang & Jia, 2011):

1) Advocate student-centered teaching which is stressed in TBLT as well. The roles that students and teachers play differs from the traditional teaching mode. It means students are active information builders so they play the role of center in task activities while teachers are the promoters and helpers.

2) Create real situation/ settings. The settings should be practical as much as possible for language cannot learned away from society. And only in this way, can there are enough chances for students to discuss and deal with the reality of the modern world.

3) Focus on collaborative learning which is in favor of the communication and negotiation between students and teachers. Learners construct understanding of things in their own way and it provides multiple possibilities. The collaboration enhances their abundant and comprehensive thinking.

4) Provide adequate resources. Constructive learning theory attaches importance to teaching environment, offering various information to students by means of Internet technology in most cases, such as multimedia.

# 4. Investigation into TBLT of Basic English

## Basic English course lasts four semesters and the textbooks are *“Integrated Skills of English 2 & 3 & 4”* (the 3rd ed.), published by Higher Education Press and Zou Weicheng as the chief editor.

## 4.1 Teaching Application

 The following parts describe how TBLT is applied to Basic English teaching. Take *“Integrated Skills of English 3”* Unit 5 Creating a Caribbean Spring Festival as an example.

## 4.1.1 Pre-task Phase

The teacher leads in task related topics—Chinese festivals, the time before and after a festival, activities for group/ family/ children’s celebrations, traditional foods at the festival dinner and festivals in English-speaking countries.

Activity 1: Brainstorming: work in groups to think of at least five words/ phrases/ expressions regarding above topics and write them down in notebooks. Students discuss with each other to complete the task and in the meanwhile the teacher gives some hints and examples. Several minutes later, the teacher provides some references for students.

Activity 2: Listen to a recording whose topic is the torch festival and answer questions. The first listening is played smoothly and in the second time, the teacher gives a pause in some important points. Then, it is time for students to answer the question. Thanks to activity 1, students already have learned some relevant expressions and it is easier for them to answer the questions. The third time is for correcting and finally the teacher concludes the main idea as well as some necessary words and phrases.

## 4.1.2 Task Phase

Through the warming-up and leading-in in the pre-task phase, students’ interest has been greatly motivated, and it lays the language foundation for the following tasks.

Activity 1: Pair dialogue. Students are asked to work in pairs to answer the question: How do you celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year? In this part, students are given 5 minutes to discuss with their partners and plan a dialogue about 3 minutes with the help of expressions provided in the textbook. Next is the task reporting. Volunteers report the dialogue first and the teacher picks up some pairs to do the report as appropriate. Then the teacher makes comments and sums up the main points.

Activity 2: Group discussion. Students are divided into several groups, 3 or 4 people in one group, to make a segmentation of the article “Creating a Caribbean Spring Festival”, dwell on the text in paragraphs and generalize the meaning of each segmentation. And then they are told to summarize the story in about 50 words.

Activity 3: Story study and reproducing. The teacher puts forward some questions for students to discuss and answer. During the time, the teacher provides some clues and gives some instructions. After finishing the questions, the teacher offers some main points and strings them together to retell the story. Next is students’ turn to retell the story.

## 4.1.3 Post-task Phase

This part mainly covers language points focus. The teacher lists the key words, phrases and sentence patterns to promote a better understanding. Then there are multitudinous tasks and exercises to help students to master the knowledge.

Activity 1: Gap filling. Students are told to put the words from the text in the blanks to form a complete sentence.

Activity 2: Phrase replacing. It means rewriting the sentences using the expressions learned in the text.

Activity 3: Sentence making and translation. The target is to make students have a good command of both the meaning and usage of key words, phrases and sentence patterns.

## 4.2 Research Methods

 In order to have a more objective and visual analysis on the TBLT applied in Basic English course for English major, a survey was conducted among English majors of Hangzhou College of Commerce in December 2017.

## 4.2.1 Subjects

The subjects were 42 seniors of English majors. There were 4 males and 38 females with age ranging from 21 to 23. All the subjects have formally studied English as a foreign language for three years in junior high schools, three years in senior high schools and more than four semesters in the college. (Note: Basic English course starts in the first semester and ends in the fourth semester.)

## 4.2.2 Procedures

A questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed in Chinese for subjects having a better understanding of the questions. The questionnaire consists of four parts--pre-task (5 items), while-task (14 items) and post-task (5 items) phases and one short answer question concerning the implementation of TBLT mode in Basic English course. To each statement, there are choices in 5 scales ranging from “1=This statement is completely true of me”, “2= This statement is usually true of me”, “3= This statement is sometimes true of me”, “4= This statement is seldom true of me”, to “5=This statement is never true of me”. The subjects are asked to choose the one that best describes their learning situations and experiences in Basic English course. The overall response rate is 100%, so the sample can be regarded as validity.

## 4.3 Results and Analysis

##  Table 4.1 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of student role in TBLT Basic English course.

**Table 4.1 Student Role in TBLT Basic English Course (n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. The teacher does warming-up and leading-in before class (e.g. brainstorming, listening). | 19 | 12 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. Class tasks are diversified (e.g. role play, storytelling, free discussion). | 17 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Class is filled with lots of collaborative activities (e.g. group/ pair work). | 15 | 14 | 9 | 4 | 0 |
| 4. I can express my views and ask questions freely in class. | 3 | 12 |  15 | 11 | 1 |
| 5. The teacher pays attention to the interaction with the students. | 16 | 19 | 7 | 0 | 0 |

As is denoted by Table 4.1, most subjects (73.8%) greatly agree that the teacher does warming-up and leading-in which usually contains brainstorming, listening and storytelling before class begins. In addition, more than three quarters of students (76.2%) confess that class tasks are always involved in group or pair work, such as role paly and free discussion. Only 4 subjects (9.5%) consider it is seldom true that class is filled with collaborative activities which are always refer to group or pair work. All these activities lay emphasis on student participation. That is, students play a central role in the class. 27 subjects (64.3%) completely or generally favor that they can express their opinions and raise questions in class. Moreover, 83.3% of subjects think the teacher pays much attention to the interaction with them throughout the class. The above description and analysis illustrate the student-centered role in TBLT Basic English course.

 Table 4.2 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of creation of settings in TBLT Basic English course.

Table 4.2 Creation of Settings in TBLT Basic English Course **(n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Class tasks are diversified (e.g. role play, storytelling, free discussion). | 17 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. The teacher focuses on teaching in the actual situation (combine the teaching content with the real situation). | 6 | 23 | 12 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. The teacher lays emphasis on the analysis of textual themes and cultural background, rather than only on the explanation of words and grammar when interpreting the text. | 14 | 14 | 14 | 0 | 0 |

In the light of previous discussion, class tasks normally include role play, storytelling and free discussion in which the teacher builds story settings as basis for further conversation in most cases. As is shown in Table 4.2, 76.2% of the subjects confess class tasks are diversified. In other words, it manifests indirectly that the teacher stresses on the creation of real situations. 29 subjects (69.0%) consent that the teacher tends to combine abstract textbook content with concrete and practical situation. As for the statement that the teacher lays emphasis on the analysis of textual themes and cultural appreciation, rather than just on the explanation of words and grammar, there are only 14 subjects (33.3%) sometimes doubt it slightly and the rest all admit its facticity. The above description and analysis illustrate that the teacher focuses on the creation of real settings in TBLT Basic English course.

 Table 4.3 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of degree of collaborative learning in TBLT Basic English course.

Table 4.3 Degree of Collaborative Learning in TBLT Basic English Course **(n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Class tasks are diversified (e.g. role play, storytelling, free discussion). | 17 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. Class is filled with lots of collaborative activities (e.g. group/ pair work). | 15 | 14 | 9 | 4 | 0 |
| 3. I will communicate with members and participate in the completion of class tasks actively during the collaborative activities. | 4 | 16 | 18 | 4 | 0 |
| 4. I think collaborative activities improve my spoken English. | 5 | 14 | 15 | 8 | 0 |

As is shown in Table 4.3, 76.2% of the subjects confess the expression that class tasks refer to role play, storytelling and free discussion and 38 subjects (90.5%) admit that they are always engaged in various group and pair work. All the above mentioned activities are equal to collaborative learning. In collaborative activities, nearly half of subjects (47.6%) says they will communicate with members and participate to complete class tasks actively. Meanwhile, a question appears that the rest half cannot do well in that, and some possible reasons or measures will be further discussed later. The statistic shows that there are 8 subjects (19.0%) think it is seldom true that collaborative learning improves their spoken English. The above description and analysis illustrate that the teacher attaches attention to the collaborative learning in TBLT Basic English course.

Table 4.4 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of condition of resource providing in TBLT Basic English classroom.

Table 4.4 Condition of Resource Providing in TBLT Basic English Course **(n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. The teacher provides various teaching resources (e.g. recording, video, PPT). | 21 | 16 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. The teacher offers clues to tasks (e.g. some necessary phrases and expressions). | 8 | 23 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The teacher summarizes, emphasizes language knowledge points and organizes targeted exercises in post-task phase. | 12 | 11 | 18 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. The after-class tasks assigned by the teacher help me to consolidate my knowledge. | 9 | 13 | 18 |  2 | 0 |

With the popularization of network, multimedia aids are widely applied to class teaching. As is denoted in Table 4.4, 88.1% of subjects state that the teacher provides various teaching resources including the network, multimedia courseware and other audio-visual aids enabling students to be possible to feel intuitively. What’s more, the teacher gives some necessary phrases or sentence patterns when the task is too hard for them to deal with, some students (73.8%) say. 22 subjects (52.4%) approve of the statement that the after-class tasks assigned by the teacher help to consolidate the new learning a lot. And to finish after-class tasks, the teacher recommends some practical websites or additional materials. Condition of Resource Providing in TBLT Basic English Course illustrates that the teacher provides adequate resources in TBLT Basic English course. The above description and analysis illustrate the condition of resource providing in TBLT basic English course.

Table 4.5 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of language acquisition in TBLT Basic English course.

Table 4.5 Language Acquisition in TBLT Basic English Course **(n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Warming-up and leading-in is very helpful to my later study. | 10 | 17 | 11 | 4 | 0 |
| 2. I think collaborative activities improve my spoken English. | 5 | 14 | 15 | 8 | 0 |
| 3. The teacher offers clues to tasks (e.g. some necessary phrases and expressions). | 8 | 23 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. The teacher summarizes and gives a reasonable evaluation after the group report. | 13 | 21 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. The teacher pays attention to the analysis of textual themes and cultural background, rather than only the explanation of words and grammar when interpreting the text. | 14 | 14 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. The teacher summarizes, emphasizes language knowledge points and organizes targeted exercises in post-task phase. | 12 | 11 | 18 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. The after-class tasks assigned by the teacher help me to consolidate my knowledge. | 9 | 13 | 18 |  2 | 0 |
| 8. The task-based teaching model enhances my memory of vocabulary and understanding of knowledge. | 7 | 16 | 16 | 3 | 0 |
| 9. Task-based teaching can combine the joint development of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating skills. | 6 | 19 | 15 | 2 | 0 |

According to Krashen’s input hypothesis, the learner makes progresses when he/ she receives second language ‘input’ that is one step beyond his/ her current stage of linguistic competence. In other words, language acquisition happens when he/ she is exposed to comprehensible input. It goes beyond the exact choice of words but emphasizes the meaning negotiation and constantly involves the presentation of context, explanation and the use of visual cues (qtd. in Schütz, 2017).

As is shown by Table 4.5, in pre-task phase, before learning the new knowledge, activities of warming-up and leading-in not only expand knowledge scope that prepare students for further learning but also stimulate interest and enthusiasm. 27 subjects (64.2%) regard that warming-up and leading-in is very helpful to his/ her later study. Comprehensible input always takes place in understandable communication, discussion and conversation. Most subjects (81.0 %) take it is true that collaborative activities improve their English speaking. 73.8% of subjects say that if the task is too difficult for them to fulfil, the teacher will provide some clues. That is one kind of auxiliary method for comprehensible input. As for the statement that the teacher summarizes and gives a reasonable evaluation after the group report, only 1 subject (2.4%) thinks it is seldom true. In fact, the evaluation and summary help students to consolidate knowledge permanently. Two third of the subjects (66.7%) strongly and usually agree that the teacher lays emphasis on the thesis statement and cultural analysis of a text rather than individual linguistic elements. 54.8% of subjects agree that the teacher summarizes, emphasizes language knowledge points and organizes targeted exercises in post-task phase. It implies that the teacher stresses on language meaning as well as language form and usage. 22 subjects (52.4%) confess that the after-class tasks assigned by the teacher help to consolidate the knowledge learned. More than half students approve that (54.8%) the task-based teaching model enhances their memory of vocabulary and understanding of knowledge. Nearly all subjects (95.2%) think task-based teaching can combine the joint development of basic English skills. The reason is that TBLT Basic English class always refers to collaborative activities which consist of various kinds of communications. The above description and analysis illustrate that the language acquisition takes place naturally in TBLT Basic English course because it stresses on comprehensible input.

Table 4.6 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of advantages and problems in TBLT Basic English course.

Table 4.6 Advantages and Problems in TBLT Basic English Course **(n=42)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | **Scale** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. I preview the text and collect relevant information consciously to better integrate into the class. | 5 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 2 |
| 2. The teacher’s teaching goals and teaching tasks are clear. | 10 | 23 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| 3. My group often fails to finish the tasks assigned by the teacher on time. | 0 | 2 | 3 | 19 | 18 |
| 4. My confidence in learning English was enhanced by speaking in class and making reports. | 2 | 11 | 19 | 10 | 0 |
| 5. I feel very nervous and upset when I speak in class. | 1 | 7 | 22 | 10 | 2 |
| 6. I reflect on and compare the task results of each group during presenting/ reporting task results. | 3 | 8 | 20 | 11 | 0 |
| 7. I like the task-based teaching model of Basic English courses. | 8 | 15 | 16 | 3 | 0 |

Apart from the advantages and problems discussed above, there are more information. As is denoted in Table 4.6, 16 subjects (38.1%) preview the text and collect relevant information consciously to better integrate into the class. It indicates that a majority of students lack the awareness of self-directed learning. 78.6% of students completely and usually agree that the teacher’s teaching goals and teaching tasks are clear. A clear teaching target gets twice the result with half the effort. A fraction of students (11.9%) says that the group they are in usually or sometimes fails to finish the tasks assigned by the teacher on time. It indicates that the time of task design and execution is not controlled well enough. 8 subjects (19.0%) admit that they completely or usually feel very nervous and upset when speaking in class. The teacher should be sensitive to the phenomenon and meets their needs when designing teaching tasks. There are more than one fourth subjects (26.2%) admit that they seldom reflect on and compare the task results of each group during the presentation/ reporting of task results. It illustrates that students’ learning motivation and the awareness of self-reflection are not strong enough and some measures are necessary. 23 students (54.8%) clearly express their fondness on the task-based teaching model in Basic English courses.

Following is a conclusion of the short answer question designed to gather the subjects’ opinions and suggestions on TBLT in Basic English course. TBLT increases interactivity as well as eases the burden because teacher gives instructions and students have more space for free play. It is an effective teaching method to cultivate cooperation ability and strengthen the mutual communication which radically differs from the teacher-centered traditional teaching pattern. The degree of enthusiasm and participation is high, so students can integrate themselves into classroom well and time seems to pass quickly owing to the various forms of teaching tasks. Besides, such a teaching mode helps to expand the extracurricular knowledge and promote the ability to deal with practical matters.

Nevertheless, some problems cannot be ignored as well. In fact, TBLT has limitations for some teaching materials in textbooks which are difficult to be designed to practical tasks. Furthermore, much importance should be attached to the design of tasks including the form of task, the difficulty of task and the time of implementation. The personality and English level vary from person to person. Introverted students are often less engaged in collaborative activities. And for the students whose English level is in middle or low degree, the positive effect of task-based language is not obvious. The division of assignment is almost impossibly equality in cooperative work. Upon most occasions, the students who have better basic skills of English always lead the task fulfillment and act as the representative when reporting the results. It frustrates the students in middle and low English level and they even will generate dependency. What’s more, because of the excessive emphasis on collaboration and communication, writing seems to be despised. And put aside the principles of task design firstly, it is annoying enough to vary the difficult level of tasks. It is no wonder that some students do not like to learn from tasks assigned by the teacher.

## 4.4 Implications

Due to the design of tasks is related to the real language environment, teachers of Basic English course should get rid of the bondage of textbooks and actively seek the extended input materials related to the teaching materials which are close to students’ life, making it easier for them to handle. As the vital teaching auxiliary, teachers need take full advantage of net resources, expand the source of information acquiring to find the materials that keep to the point, students are interested in as well as conform to students’ learning levels.

Students’ personality and English level are diverse, so the teaching tasks should be more targeted. Teachers can assign corresponding tasks to students according to their personality and English level. The way of participation is the key to motivate learning. For instance, if some students are too shy to speak in front of people, teachers must not confront the tough with toughness to compel them to do an oral report. Instead, teachers can make them do written reports. It not only meets the different preferences, but also increases the task forms for mutual learning.

To monitor the participation of students in the teaching activities and avoid negative discussions. In fact, there is no standard for grouping. But teachers should strengthen the effective supervision of students to control the time of using Chinese and ensure everyone has opportunity to express themselves. When carrying out the activities, teachers should make goals clear and encourage students to make their learning anxiety reduce to a minimum. When students are doing their tasks, teachers should walk around to supervise the discussion thread so as to control the implementation time. And teachers should offer help if necessary.

Make effective evaluation on report of task results including students’ mutual evaluation, teachers’ evaluation and self-reflection. This part cannot become mere formality. Teachers can advocate students to comment on others’ activity results. It not only broadens their minds but also facilitates their thinking. And then teachers record the mistakes appeared both in form and meaning to draw a conclusion and make the evaluation more effective. Besides, teachers should help students to build the awareness of self-reflection and self-directed learning which will benefit them a lot no matter now or future.

Provide more chances for writing. Compared to other basic skills, writing seems to be not well organized and the fact reflects the need especially in the aspect of correctness, accuracy and article structures. Writing can promote logical and critical thinking, practice imagination and creative in a certain situation. Teachers can require students to write a paper based on the text and apply the knowledge of new learning to the article. The form of writing can be diverse, such as making comments or renewing the story.

# 5. Conclusion

## Through above analysis and discussion, it is obvious that TBLT in Basic English course generally conforms to the constructive learning theory. It advocates student-centered role, creates practical settings, focuses on collaborative learning, provides adequate resources and it attaches much importance to the comprehensible input which makes language acquisition take place naturally.

TBLT breaks the shackles of traditional teaching model and integrates the knowledge with practice. It stimulates students’ interest in English learning and improves their ability to use English comprehensively. But there is no master key in the world, some problems such as the design of appropriate tasks, student engagement monitoring, and time control still have not been settled satisfactorily. And the writer hopes suggestions given above will contribute to improve these problems.

There are some limitations of this paper considering the writer’s ability, students’ own subjective judgments in the investigation, the overlapping classification of samples as well as other unavoidable interfering factors may weaken the validity of the research.

Basic English is generally considered as the most important compulsory course for English majors whose content is abundant and teaching task is heavy. And the popularization of Internet technology provides a possibility for the implementation of flipped classroom. Therefore, TBLT as a basic teaching mode for Basic English course can raise the teaching effectiveness if combined with flipped classroom mode. Teachers and researchers should keep exploring and trying to find the most effective teaching mode for the comprehensive development of English majors in China.

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