



IMPROVING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN DENTISTRY ESP COURSES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Annotation (English)

This study investigates the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving communicative competence among dentistry students studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Tashkent State Medical University in Uzbekistan. Traditional language instruction in medical ESP classrooms often emphasizes grammar and vocabulary memorization rather than practical communication skills required in professional medical settings. Therefore, this research explores whether task-based activities such as patient–doctor dialogues, role plays, clinical simulations, and case discussions can enhance students’ speaking abilities and professional communication.

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design involving 30 dentistry students with mixed English proficiency levels ranging from A2 to B2 CEFR levels. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and student questionnaires over a six-week instructional period. The findings demonstrated significant improvement in students’ fluency, confidence, vocabulary usage, and interactional competence. Furthermore, students expressed positive attitudes toward TBLT activities, reporting increased motivation and engagement during ESP lessons.

The study concludes that TBLT is an effective pedagogical approach for teaching Medical English in dentistry ESP courses. The findings suggest that integrating authentic

communicative tasks into ESP instruction can better prepare students for real-life professional communication in healthcare settings.

Keywords:

Task-Based Language Teaching, ESP, Dentistry Students, Medical English, Communicative Competence, Speaking Skills, Uzbekistan.

Аннотация (O'zbekcha)

Ushbu maqolada Tashkent State Medical University talabalariga mo'ljallangan ingliz tilini maxsus maqsadlarda o'qitish (ESP) jarayonida Vazifaga Asoslangan Til O'qitish (TBLT) metodining kommunikativ kompetensiyani rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligi tadqiq qilinadi. Tadqiqot davomida bemor va shifokor dialoglari, rolli o'yinlar, klinik simulyatsiyalar hamda klinik holat muhokamalari kabi kommunikativ faoliyatlardan foydalanildi. Tadqiqot kvazi-eksperimental usul asosida olib borildi va unda ingliz tilini bilish darajasi A2–B2 bo'lgan stomatologiya talabarlari ishtirok etdi. Ma'lumotlar pre-test, post-test, so'rovnomma va sinf kuzatuvlari orqali yig'ildi. Natijalar TBLT talabalarining gapirish ko'nikmalari, lug'at boyligi, o'ziga bo'lgan ishonchi va kommunikativ kompetensiyasini sezilarli darajada rivojlantirganini ko'rsatdi. Bundan tashqari, talabalar vazifaga asoslangan faoliyatlarga nisbatan ijobiy munosabat bildirdilar va darslarga qiziqishlari ortganini ta'kidladilar. Tadqiqot natijalari TBLT metodining tibbiy ingliz tilini o'qitishda samarali yondashuv ekanligini tasdiqlaydi.

Калит so'zlar

Vazifaga asoslangan til o'qitish, ESP, stomatologiya talabarlari, tibbiy ingliz tili, kommunikativ kompetensiya, gapirish ko'nikmalari, O'zbekiston.

Аннотация (Русский)

В данной статье рассматривается эффективность метода обучения языку на основе заданий (Task-Based Language Teaching — TBLT) в развитии коммуникативной компетенции студентов стоматологического факультета, изучающих английский язык для специальных целей (ESP) в Tashkent State Medical University. Исследование сосредоточено на использовании коммуникативных заданий, таких как диалоги «врач–пациент», ролевые игры, клинические симуляции и обсуждение клинических случаев на занятиях по медицинскому английскому языку. В исследовании использовался

квазиэкспериментальный метод с участием студентов стоматологического факультета с уровнями владения английским языком A2–B2. Данные были собраны с помощью пре-тестов, пост-тестов, анкетирования и наблюдений за учебным процессом. Результаты показали, что TBLT значительно улучшил навыки говорения, словарный запас, уверенность студентов и их коммуникативную компетенцию. Кроме того, студенты положительно оценили задания коммуникативного характера и отметили повышение мотивации и вовлеченности в учебный процесс. Исследование подтверждает эффективность метода TBLT в обучении медицинскому английскому языку в рамках ESP.

Ключевые слова

обучение языку на основе заданий, ESP, студенты стоматологии, медицинский английский язык, коммуникативная компетенция, навыки говорения, Узбекистан.

1. Introduction

English has become an essential language in the fields of medicine, dentistry, science, and international communication. Medical professionals increasingly require English proficiency to communicate with international colleagues, access medical literature, participate in conferences, and interact with patients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. As a result, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained significant importance in medical universities worldwide.

In Uzbekistan, the growing internationalization of higher education has increased the demand for effective ESP instruction in medical universities. Dentistry students, in particular, need communicative competence to perform professional tasks such as taking patient histories, explaining procedures, discussing symptoms, and providing treatment recommendations. However, many ESP classrooms continue to rely heavily on traditional teaching approaches focused on grammar translation, memorization, and teacher-centered instruction. Such methods often fail to develop students' practical communication skills.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as an effective communicative approach that emphasizes meaningful language use through authentic tasks. According to Ellis (2003), TBLT encourages learners to use language purposefully in realistic situations. In medical ESP contexts, task-based activities can simulate real clinical

communication and provide students with opportunities to practice professional interaction.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of TBLT in improving communicative competence among dentistry students studying ESP at Tashkent State Medical University. The study focuses on the implementation of patient–doctor dialogues, role plays, case discussions, and clinical simulations in Medical English instruction.

Research Questions:

- *How does Task-Based Language Teaching affect dentistry students' communicative competence in ESP classes?*
- *What are students' perceptions of task-based activities in Medical English lessons?*
- *Which task-based activities are most effective for improving speaking skills?*

Research Objectives:

- ✓ To examine the impact of TBLT on students' speaking performance.
- ✓ To explore students' attitudes toward task-based learning activities.
- ✓ To identify effective communicative tasks for Dentistry ESP instruction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

ESP refers to language instruction designed to meet the specific needs of learners in particular academic or professional fields. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that ESP focuses on language relevant to learners' future careers and communicative requirements. In medical education, ESP courses aim to develop students' ability to communicate effectively in healthcare settings.

Medical English differs from general English because it requires specialized terminology, professional communication strategies, and context-specific interaction skills. According to Basturkmen (2010), ESP instruction should integrate authentic tasks that reflect learners' target professional situations.

2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes meaningful communication through tasks. Nunan (2004) defines a task as a classroom

activity in which learners use language to achieve a communicative goal. TBLT encourages active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Ellis (2003) explains that TBLT consists of three main stages:

- **Pre-task phase**
- **Task cycle**
- **Language focus**

In the pre-task stage, learners are introduced to the topic and vocabulary. During the task cycle, students complete communicative activities collaboratively. Finally, the language focus stage allows learners to analyze language forms and receive feedback.

2.3 TBLT in Medical ESP

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TBLT in ESP and medical education contexts. Robinson (2011) found that task-based instruction improved learners' fluency and confidence in professional communication. Similarly, Long (2015) argued that authentic communicative tasks help learners acquire language more naturally.

In medical ESP classrooms, role plays and clinical simulations are particularly beneficial because they replicate real healthcare communication. Students can practice explaining symptoms, giving instructions, and interacting with patients in realistic scenarios.

Despite growing interest in TBLT, limited research has focused on dentistry students in Uzbekistan. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by examining the implementation of TBLT in Dentistry ESP courses within the Uzbek educational context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the impact of TBLT on dentistry students' communicative competence. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used to obtain comprehensive results.

3.2 Participants

The participants consisted of 30 first-year dentistry students at Tashkent State Medical University. The students' English proficiency levels ranged from A2 to B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

3.3 Instruments

The following research instruments were used:

- ✓ *Pre-test and post-test speaking assessments*
- ✓ *Student questionnaires*
- ✓ *Classroom observation notes*
- ✓ *Teacher reflections*

3.4 Procedure

The study was conducted over six weeks. At the beginning of the study, students completed a speaking pre-test to assess their communicative competence.

During the instructional period, students participated in various task-based activities, including:

- ✓ *Patient–doctor dialogues*
- ✓ *Clinical role plays*
- ✓ *Case discussions*
- ✓ *Clinical simulations*
- ✓ *Group problem-solving tasks*

Each lesson followed the TBLT framework:

Pre-task Stage:

- Students learned key vocabulary and expressions related to dentistry and patient communication.

Task Cycle:

- Students worked collaboratively to complete communicative tasks.

Language Focus:

- The teacher provided feedback on grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

At the end of the study, students completed a post-test and questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis

The speaking tests were assessed using criteria such as:

- *Fluency*
- *Vocabulary usage*
- *Pronunciation*
- *Interactional competence*
- *Accuracy*

The quantitative data were analyzed by comparing pre-test and post-test scores. Qualitative data from questionnaires and observations were analyzed thematically.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Improvement in Speaking Skills

The results revealed considerable improvement in students' communicative competence after the implementation of TBLT activities.

Assessment Criteria	Pre-test Average	Post-test Average
Fluency	5.1	7.4
Vocabulary	5.4	7.6
Pronunciation	5.6	7.1
Interaction	4.9	7.5
Accuracy	5.2	6.9

The findings indicate that students became more confident and communicative during classroom interaction.

4.2 Student Perceptions

Questionnaire responses demonstrated positive student attitudes toward TBLT. Most students reported that task-based activities:

- *increased motivation,*
- *reduced speaking anxiety,*

- *improved confidence,*
- *created a more engaging learning environment.*

Students particularly enjoyed role plays and clinical simulations because these activities resembled real professional situations.

One student commented:

“Role plays helped me practice how to communicate with patients confidently.”

Another student stated:

“Clinical simulations made lessons more interesting and practical.”

4.3 Effectiveness of Different Tasks

Among the implemented tasks, patient–doctor dialogues and clinical simulations were found to be the most effective. These activities provided students with authentic opportunities to practice medical communication.

Case discussions also improved students’ critical thinking and collaborative skills. Students learned to express opinions, ask questions, and negotiate meaning during interaction.

The findings support Ellis’s (2003) argument that meaningful communication promotes language acquisition more effectively than isolated grammar instruction.

4.4 Discussion

The results of this study align with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of TBLT in ESP contexts. Task-based instruction encouraged active participation and increased students’ opportunities to use English communicatively.

Unlike traditional teacher-centered approaches, TBLT created a learner-centered environment in which students actively constructed knowledge through interaction. Authentic tasks also helped bridge the gap between classroom learning.

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