

TASK-BASED VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery is a crucial component in English language learning as it supports students' ability to communicate effectively. Many students still face difficulties in learning and using English vocabulary due to traditional teaching methods that emphasize memorization over meaningful communication. This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive library research design by analyzing theories, books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and vocabulary teaching published between 2021-2025. The findings indicate that task-based activities such as information-gap tasks, role-plays, problem-solving activities, story-completion tasks, and vocabulary games significantly enhance vocabulary retention, student motivation, classroom interaction, and communicative competence. Task-based learning encourages students to actively use vocabulary within the context of meaningful communication. This study concludes that task-based vocabulary learning is highly beneficial for EFL classrooms as it creates an interactive and student-centered learning environment. Teachers are encouraged to implement communicative tasks to improve vocabulary mastery and student engagement in English language learning.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, Vocabulary Development, EFL, Language Teaching, Communicative Learning.

A. Introduction

Vocabulary is widely recognized as a fundamental component of second and foreign language acquisition because it functions as the building blocks of communication. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners often struggle to express ideas, comprehend input, and participate meaningfully in both spoken and written communication (Putri, 2022a). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, vocabulary mastery becomes even more critical

since learners are not exposed to the language in their daily environment. Consequently, classroom instruction plays a dominant role in shaping learners' lexical development. However, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in acquiring and retaining vocabulary due to instructional practices that rely heavily on memorization, translation, and repetition without meaningful use (Gui & Ismail, 2024).

Traditional vocabulary teaching methods are often characterized by

teacher-centered approaches in which students are required to memorize word lists, translate meanings, and complete mechanical exercises. Although these methods may support short-term recall, they are generally less effective in promoting long-term retention and communicative use. Learners may recognize word meanings in isolation but struggle to apply them appropriately in real-life contexts. This gap between passive knowledge and active use indicates the need for more effective instructional approaches that emphasize meaningful engagement with vocabulary in communicative situations (Putri, 2022b).

In response to these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as an alternative pedagogical approach that emphasizes the use of language as a tool for completing meaningful tasks. TBLT shifts the focus from form-based instruction to meaning-focused interaction, where learners are encouraged to use language naturally while performing tasks that resemble real-world communication. Within this framework, vocabulary is not taught as isolated items but is acquired incidentally and intentionally through

task performance. Learners encounter new lexical items in context and are required to use them actively in order to accomplish specific goals (Putri & Nugraha, 2022).

Task-based vocabulary learning involves various interactive activities such as information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, role-plays, story completion, and vocabulary games. These activities require learners to negotiate meaning, exchange information, and collaborate with peers, thereby creating opportunities for repeated exposure and meaningful use of new vocabulary. Such engagement enhances cognitive processing, which is essential for deeper lexical acquisition. Moreover, the communicative nature of tasks increases learners' motivation and reduces anxiety, making the learning environment more supportive and engaging (Hoang & Dinh, 2022).

Recent studies have highlighted the effectiveness of task-based instruction in improving vocabulary retention and communicative competence. Learners who participate in task-based activities tend to demonstrate better recall of vocabulary items and greater ability to

use them appropriately in context compared to those taught through traditional methods. In addition, TBLT fosters learner autonomy, critical thinking, and interactional skills, which are essential for overall language proficiency development. These benefits make task-based vocabulary instruction particularly relevant in contemporary EFL classrooms, where communicative competence is a primary learning objective (Albelihi, 2022).

Despite its advantages, the implementation of TBLT in vocabulary teaching still faces several challenges, such as limited teacher familiarity with task design, large classroom sizes, and curriculum constraints (Chan, 2023). Therefore, it is important to further explore how task-based strategies can be effectively integrated into vocabulary instruction to maximize learning outcomes. Understanding the role of different task types in supporting vocabulary acquisition can provide valuable insights for teachers in designing more effective instructional practices.

B. Literature Review

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development refers to the gradual process through which learners acquire word knowledge, including understanding word meanings, forms, and appropriate usage in different contexts. It is not limited to memorizing isolated lexical items but involves the ability to recognize, interpret, and apply words effectively in communication. Nation (2001) explains that vocabulary knowledge consists of several interconnected dimensions, namely pronunciation, spelling, meaning, collocation, grammatical behavior, and frequency of use. These components indicate that knowing a word requires more than understanding its definition; learners must also know how it functions within sentences and discourse (Fasih, 2022).

In language learning, vocabulary development is considered essential because it directly influences learners' reading comprehension, listening ability, speaking fluency, and writing accuracy. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners often struggle to construct meaningful sentences or understand input from others. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition should be viewed as an

ongoing developmental process that requires continuous exposure and practice. Repeated encounters with words in meaningful contexts are necessary to strengthen memory retention and deepen understanding. In this regard, contextualized learning plays a significant role in helping learners internalize vocabulary more effectively than rote memorization techniques (Fasih, 2022).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an instructional approach that emphasizes the use of language as a tool for completing meaningful tasks. Rather than focusing primarily on grammatical forms, TBLT prioritizes communicative meaning and real-life language use. Ellis (2003) defines a task as an activity in which learners use the target language to achieve a specific communicative goal, such as solving a problem, obtaining information, or producing a product (Weerasinghe et al., 2022).

In TBLT, learners are actively engaged in interaction, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative problem-solving. This approach shifts the role of the teacher from being the primary source of knowledge to a facilitator

who guides learners through task completion. Willis (1996) outlines a three-stage framework for implementing task-based learning, consisting of the pre-task stage, the task cycle, and the language focus stage. In the pre-task stage, learners are introduced to the topic and prepared for the upcoming task. During the task cycle, learners work individually or in groups to complete communicative tasks. Finally, in the language focus stage, learners analyze language forms used during the task and reflect on their performance (Fasih, 2023).

Task-Based Vocabulary Learning

Task-based vocabulary learning refers to the integration of vocabulary acquisition within communicative task activities. This approach emphasizes learning vocabulary through meaningful use rather than isolated memorization. Schmitt (2008) argues that active engagement with lexical items, including using, noticing, and retrieving words in context, significantly enhances vocabulary retention and supports long-term memory development (Bergström, 2023).

Through task-based activities such as role-plays, information-gap

tasks, problem-solving discussions, and storytelling tasks, learners are exposed to vocabulary in meaningful and interactive contexts. These tasks require students to use target vocabulary repeatedly in order to complete communicative objectives, which strengthens lexical acquisition. In addition, the collaborative nature of tasks encourages learners to negotiate meaning, ask questions, and clarify understanding, all of which contribute to deeper cognitive processing of vocabulary (Park, 2022).

Task-based vocabulary learning also supports incidental learning, where students acquire new words naturally while focusing on meaning rather than form. This process is particularly effective because vocabulary is encountered in realistic situations, making it easier for learners to remember and apply in future communication. Furthermore, such an approach increases learner motivation, as students are actively involved in engaging and purposeful activities rather than passive memorization.

C. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design using library research methods to analyze Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) strategies in vocabulary development. The data were collected from secondary sources, including books, journal articles, and previous research studies published between 2021 and 2025 that are relevant to vocabulary learning and task-based instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The collected literature was selected based on its relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding task-based vocabulary learning. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis by identifying, categorizing, and interpreting key themes related to vocabulary development strategies, types of tasks, and their impact on learners' vocabulary mastery. The findings were then synthesized to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of task-based approaches in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence.

D. Findings and Discussion

Derived from the analysis of relevant literature published between 2021 and 2025, indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has a significant and positive impact on vocabulary development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Across various studies reviewed, task-based vocabulary instruction consistently demonstrates improvements in learners' vocabulary retention, motivation, classroom engagement, and communicative competence. These results suggest that vocabulary learning is more effective when it is embedded in meaningful communicative tasks rather than taught through isolated memorization techniques.

One of the most prominent findings is that task-based activities enhance vocabulary retention. Learners who are exposed to new vocabulary through communicative tasks such as information-gap activities, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks tend to remember words more effectively than those who learn through traditional methods. This improvement can be explained by the depth of cognitive processing involved in task-based learning. When students

use vocabulary to complete a task, they are required to understand, retrieve, and apply words in context, which strengthens memory encoding. According to Schmitt (2008), active engagement with lexical items is essential for long-term retention, and task-based instruction naturally facilitates this process (Jedi-Sari-Biglar & Liman-Kaban, 2023).

In addition, task-based vocabulary learning increases learner motivation. Many studies report that students feel more motivated when they participate in interactive and meaningful activities compared to conventional rote learning. Tasks such as storytelling, role-playing, and games create a more enjoyable learning environment, reducing anxiety and increasing willingness to participate. Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition because motivated learners are more likely to engage in repeated practice and take risks in using new vocabulary. The interactive nature of TBLT allows learners to see immediate communicative purposes for the vocabulary they are learning, which further enhances their intrinsic motivation (Duong et al., 2021).

Another important finding is the improvement of classroom interaction. Task-based learning encourages students to work collaboratively, exchange information, and negotiate meaning with peers. During these interactions, learners are exposed to different perspectives and vocabulary usage patterns, which enrich their lexical knowledge. For example, in information-gap tasks, students must ask and answer questions to complete missing information, requiring them to actively use target vocabulary. This interaction not only supports vocabulary acquisition but also develops social and communicative skills. The classroom becomes more student-centered, with the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than the sole source of knowledge.

Furthermore, task-based vocabulary instruction contributes significantly to communicative competence. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in real-life situations. Through TBLT, learners practice vocabulary in contexts that resemble authentic communication, which helps them understand how words function in different situations. This includes

understanding collocations, register, and pragmatic usage. As learners repeatedly use vocabulary in varied communicative tasks, they become more confident and accurate in expressing their ideas. This aligns with Ellis (2003), who emphasizes that meaningful communication is essential for language acquisition (Huang & Gandhioke, 2021).

The analysis also reveals that different types of tasks contribute differently to vocabulary development. Information-gap tasks are particularly effective in promoting interaction and negotiation of meaning because they require learners to exchange specific information using target vocabulary. Role-plays help learners practice vocabulary in simulated real-life situations, such as shopping, asking for directions, or conducting interviews. Problem-solving tasks encourage critical thinking and deeper cognitive engagement, as students must discuss and evaluate possible solutions using relevant vocabulary. Story-completion tasks support creativity and narrative vocabulary development, allowing learners to construct coherent texts collaboratively. Vocabulary games, on the other hand, increase engagement

and repetition, which are essential for reinforcement and retention.

Despite these advantages, the findings also highlight several challenges in implementing TBLT for vocabulary instruction. One major challenge is the varying proficiency levels among students. In mixed-ability classrooms, some learners may struggle to participate actively in tasks due to limited vocabulary knowledge, which can reduce their confidence. Additionally, teachers may face difficulties in designing effective tasks that balance linguistic objectives with communicative goals. Task preparation can be time-consuming and requires careful planning to ensure that vocabulary targets are appropriately integrated.

Another challenge is classroom management. Task-based learning often involves group work and active interaction, which can lead to noise and lack of control if not properly managed. Teachers need strong classroom management skills to ensure that tasks remain focused and productive. Furthermore, some educational contexts still emphasize traditional assessment methods that prioritize grammar and written tests over communicative performance,

making it difficult to fully implement TBLT approaches.

However, despite these challenges, the overall findings strongly support the effectiveness of task-based vocabulary instruction. The literature consistently shows that when properly implemented, TBLT creates a more engaging, meaningful, and effective learning environment for vocabulary acquisition. It shifts learning from passive memorization to active usage, allowing students to develop both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge (Putri & Nugraha, 2022).

Task-based vocabulary development strategies provide a comprehensive framework for improving English vocabulary learning in EFL classrooms. The integration of communicative tasks not only enhances vocabulary retention but also fosters motivation, interaction, and communicative competence. While challenges exist in implementation, they can be addressed through careful planning, teacher training, and appropriate task design. Therefore, TBLT represents a valuable pedagogical approach that aligns with modern language teaching goals, particularly in developing

learners' ability to use vocabulary effectively in real-life communication contexts.

D. Conclusions

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an effective approach for enhancing vocabulary development in EFL contexts because it integrates vocabulary learning into meaningful and communicative activities. Based on the literature review, task-based strategies such as information-gap tasks, role-plays, problem-solving activities, story completion, and vocabulary games contribute significantly to improving vocabulary retention, learner motivation, classroom interaction, and communicative competence. Unlike traditional methods that rely on memorization, TBLT encourages active language use, allowing students to acquire vocabulary more naturally and effectively through context. Although challenges such as classroom management and task design still exist, these can be minimized through proper planning and teacher readiness. Overall, TBLT provides a student-centered and interactive learning environment that supports sustainable vocabulary

acquisition and aligns with modern communicative language teaching goals.

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