How can Language Curriculum Theory Be Coherent with Practice through Task-Based Learning

in a Third Grader's EFL Classroom?

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Abstract

This paper presents an action research aimed at exploring the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) for the language curriculum theory to be coherent with practice in an EFL third grader's classroom at the I.E Francisco Miranda in Medellín, Colombia. The data were collected through a journal, an interview to the cooperating teacher, a survey to the students, and two tasks done by the students. The data analysis revealed that TBL is an effective approach to get coherence between the institution's language curriculum objectives and classroom practices since it encourages the development of the communicative competences promoted by the English syllabus, whose main objective is communication. This research provides valuable information about the usefulness of TBL approach in communicative syllabi.

Key words: Language Curriculum Coherence, Task-Based Learning, Communicative Competence.

Degree Requirement

This action research report is submitted as a degree requirement of the Foreign Language

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Similarly, I express all my gratitude and love to my mother and my family for all their support and motivation. Besides, many thanks for being there and believing in me. Equally, I would like all my appreciation to my research advisor Astrid Tangarife Sánchez, especially for her patience and perseverance; all her help, support and knowledge were the key to accomplish this project.

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Preface

After five years of training on EFL teaching and learning, and some knowledge and experience regarding action research, I decided to conduct this study since I assumed it as an opportunity to enhance my professional development, and to do my bit for improving the teaching and learning practices in a public context, as the one of the Institución Educativa Francisco Miranda in Medellín, Colombia, in which some teachers claimed that they were not prepared to teach the English course since they lack the training needed to consider all the dynamics and implications of teaching a foreign language.

Moreover, as along the undergraduate program I had the opportunity to take some courses concerning curriculum and methodologies and approaches, I felt able to analyze the appropriateness of the institutional English syllabus and classroom practices to be coherent with the language curriculum objectives. I discovered that they were not consistent; therefore, I looked for a teaching-learning approach that achieved such objectives.

Consequently, I understood that there were many aspects that could be improved from the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach, whose principles and aims are totally related to the ones pursued by the institutional English syllabus; therefore, that was the reason I considered that TBL was the most useful approach that could help me in getting the curriculum coherence that I was seeking for the Francisco Miranda's context.

Description of the Context

The Institución Educativa Francisco Miranda, Sede Julio Arboleda is an elementary public school located in Miranda neighborhood in Medellín, Colombia. From the philosophy of the institution the student is conceived as an integral being, with attitudes, aptitudes and skills. Its educational approach is based on a pedagogical model called "humanístico social integrador" aimed at providing students with the skills to be competent in a globalized world. Moreover, to achieve high academic and behavioral levels and to contribute to students' human development, the institution has some agreements with institutions as Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad Luis Amigó, Universidad Nacional and INDER.

Concerning the spaces of the institution, it has a good infrastructure with quite big classrooms, a playground, hallways, and offices. There is also a library with some books about different subjects and topics, and a screen. However, it is very small to accommodate so many students, thus it is very difficult to develop ludic activities. Regarding classrooms, almost all of them have a TV screen, a computer, sound amplifiers and internet, resources that could be effectively used in the English classes.

Regarding the teachers, they are "Licenciados" in Elementary education, and they are in charge of teaching every single subject of the institutional curriculum. Therefore, they need to have a multidisciplinary knowledge to accomplish such a goal, but through my observations and interactions with them, I learned that most of them are not trained to teach the English class. In fact, they usually provide students with a copy concerning different topics, but most of them are focused on vocabulary isolated from a context.

Concerning the students, the groups are mixed; that is, boys and girls study together, and the average number of students per group is thirty-five, approximately. They are kids between

five and eleven years old who belong to a low-stratum neighborhood; usually very active and with a notorious good disposition to learn. They live near touristic places such as "Jardín Botánico", "Parque Explora", "Parque de los deseos", and "Parque Norte" which are often visited by foreigners; the students seem to have some contact with these places since they mention them in their conversations. Besides, their topics of conversations are also about music as "reggaeton", movies, soap operas, TV shows and social networks.

As for the English syllabus, the institution does not suggest following any particular methodology to teach but they suggest teaching and learning by competences to foster students' communication. However, the methodology used in classes seems to be traditional since the contents taught are isolated from the students' reality, most of the times. Students learn colors, greetings, shapes, members of the family or body parts, because it is stated in the institutional syllabus, but not for their real communicative purposes. In fact, the socio-cultural context in which they are immersed does not require speaking English; thus, students do not perceive this language as useful. I consider that his might happen because they have not been shown what to do with what they learn.

Statement of the problem

Through my observations at the institution, I noticed that there are some difficulties concerning the consistency between what the institutional language curriculum establishes in the syllabus for teaching and learning English, and what really happens in classrooms. In the English syllabus they present a review of the different methodologies or approaches as Total Physical Response, Whole Language, the Communicative Approach, and Task-Based Learning to display the teaching-learning dynamics of each approach. However, as stated in the description of the context, they do not adopt a particular methodology, but they suggest learning by competences

(p.12). They state that according to Canale and Swain (1980), foreign language competences should be grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence, but for practical purposes in their context they focus on grammatical and discourse competence because our context does not provide the conditions to work on sociolinguistic and strategic competence. In this respect, they refer to time constraints and the cultural environment as considerable limitations to get these competences (p.12). However, examining the syllabus carefully, a contradiction can be noticed because on page 5 of the same document, they state that the specific foreign language competences that the students are going to learn are linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence.

Moreover, they propose some methodological strategies aimed at promoting integral language learning in a globalized society. In relation to this, I consider it is incoherent to think about integral language learning without developing the sociolinguistic and strategic competences. In fact, if they want to prepare their students for a globalized world, they should work on the socio-cultural and strategic competences since it is crucial to understand the dynamics of a context to have more effective communication. Additionally, the syllabus proposes to view language as a means of communication, not as a set of rules, vocabulary, and patterns (p.3).

However, in this institution, the teaching-learning practices do not reflect the concept of language that they present in the English syllabus. Teachers cannot communicate in English and students perceive this subject as something not useful for them in their daily lives. In this respect, I wrote in my journal: "A regular English class is taught by using some photocopies in which children must fill a crossword puzzle, color some drawings, and cut pictures. Although the topics taught are not irrelevant when learning a language, they are not connected to children's

communicative needs" (September 10th, 2017). What students do is to accomplish activities

whose focus is to learn vocabulary, but vocabulary that students rapidly forget because they are

not provided with opportunities to use it in subsequent classes. For instance, one class, they work

on body parts; next class, the exercise is about classroom objects and materials or the verb "to

be". Since topics are disconnected and isolated from the students' reality, they forget them. In

summary, language is not taught for communicating.

Similarly, although English is the universal language, our context is not bilingual; thus,

students of this context do not need the English language in their daily lives. Consequently, there

is a dilemma here: English is not a real necessity for students in their context, but the institution

considers English as a useful tool for them to be prepared for a globalized world in which

English is the main means of communication. As an English teacher, I believe that it is important

to create the necessity and to show the students the contexts in which English is something useful

and required.

Finally, in a conversation I had with my first cooperating teacher in second grade, she

admitted not knowing anything about communicative competences for teaching English, so her

practices do not have any particular methodology or theoretical foundation. In fact, she believes

that this is a considerable issue in the entire school context, even in high school. This is a real

concern in this institution because if they want to accomplish the curriculum objectives, it is

important that teachers have ideas about what and how to teach; it is a matter of teachers'

training.

In conclusion, the English syllabus of the institution lacks coherence, both in theory and

practice. Nevertheless, more than criticizing the theory itself, the central concern of this research

is that the English syllabus proposes a series of procedures that, generally, are not accomplished in practice.

Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in the statement of the problem, the lack of coherence between the language curriculum objectives and the actual classroom practices was evident in the context in which this action research was conducted; an aspect that I wanted to improve through the implementation of Task-Based Learning. In this section I will refer to the main concepts that support my action research: Language Curriculum Coherence and Task-Based Learning (TBL). In the latter concept, the model of Communicative Competence plays a significant role; therefore, I will also refer to it.

Language Curriculum Coherence

Regarding language, specifically, Nation and Macalister (2010) in their book "Language Curriculum Design" consider some elements that need to be considered when creating a language curriculum: environmental analysis, needs analysis, application of principles, and goals. All these can contribute to have a more realistic and applicable curriculum program, considering the real features and needs of the context in which it will be implemented. That is, a curriculum that can be brought into practice by focusing on needs analysis and goals. In this respect, the authors state that students' learning necessities should be seriously considered to achieve what is intended to be achieved. That is, a needs analysis is directed to set the goals of a course, and it should consider what learners need to learn, what they lack, and what they wish to learn, aiming to reach the program goals (p.24).

Similarly, Richards (1984) states that to develop an applicable language curriculum, it is necessary to follow some processes as needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology and evaluation. Nevertheless, the problem with curriculum is that many programs lack rigor and accountability when they are designed; that is, the guidelines proposed are not followed, and the educational processes are not evaluated. The author asserts that a curriculum cannot be reduced or narrowed to a syllabus. He states that the syllabus design is a phase within the process of curriculum development (p.2). I consider this assertion relevant for my action research because when I develop the ideas concerning curriculum, I specifically refer to the English syllabus of the institution as a component of the curriculum. From my understanding, a serious and systematic curriculum development could contribute to appropriate syllabus designs; and consequently, there might be more coherence between the theory underlying the syllabus and the actual classroom practices.

Moreover, concerning the concept of coherence, Buchmann and Floden (1990) state that coherence is related to connectedness and consistency among elements. They develop this concept in the educational context of the United States where it has become a central concern when designing and assessing educational programs. In fact, they claim that a set of courses can be a "program" only if the set coheres. That is, the terms "coherent" and "program" have a shared and interchangeable meaning. Thus, I conclude that a set of courses cannot be considered a program if they are not connected and coherent. They also state that the more coherence there is, the more successful the students' learning remains; it is even "the primary indicator of curriculum worth"; that is why they also claim that the word "program" is implicitly interpreted as good and effective education (p.3).

In the same line, Hammerness (2006) refers to the efforts of the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) in the United States to become more coherent; an experience where directors, teachers and students were involved. The problem was identified because of the students' complaints related the lack of coherence between the program curriculum and the classroom practices. Therefore, the institutional curriculum designers faced the challenges to improve their educational practices with an integrated and well-organized education program, instead of a series of disconnected courses. Hence, they started to review the institutional documents to explore the program inconsistencies, to observe graduates' practices and faculty meetings, and to conduct some interviews to directors and teachers, to analyze what had to be changed.

Subsequently, they began to make a series of reforms as co-planning, co-teaching, mentoring, supervision, creation of smaller groups, focusing on the student's learning, and use of content pedagogical strategies. As a result, they succeeded after implementing all the strategies they considered suitable for their problematic situation. Evidence of this was that they could restructure the whole program and achieve more coherence between the theory underlying the program and the current practices. From this experience, I consider important to highlight that being coherent involves many efforts of all the members of an educational community, and it can be achieved with commitment and disposition.

Task-Based Learning (TBL)

Concerning TBL, it is important to begin by defining what a "task" is. According to Ellis's work (as cited in Mustadi, 2012), a task is "an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective" (p. 23). Besides, tasks should

involve some principles, such as promotion of attention to meaning, focus on communicative

needs of students, and fostering the sharing of information. Similarly, Mustadi (2012) states that

a language learning task should have meaning as the primary focus, it should be goal oriented,

evaluated in terms of outcomes, and be related to the real world (p.46). Moreover, Nunan (1988)

asserts that tasks are concerned with communicative language use. In other words, they are

undertakings for learners' comprehension, production and interaction in the target language in

context (p.18). In addition, the author introduces the components of a task: goals, input, activity,

setting, and students and teachers' roles.

Similarly, Norris (2009) refers to the Task-Based Cycle consisting of a series of

procedures such as task-input phase, in which the vocabulary that is going to be useful for doing

the task is presented; the pedagogical task-work to show how to do the task; subsequently, the

target task performance in which the task itself is done, so the production process takes place;

and finally, the task follow-up whose goal is to provide students with feedback on the task

performance. Sánchez (2004) states that TBL is an approach to teach language that allows seeing

language learning as a process in which students can cope with different communicative

situations. He also discussed the idea that tasks as "real-world tasks" can be conducted naturally

in a classroom. It means, the nature of a task is going to depend on classroom situations.

Additionally, Brandl (2007) refers to TBL as an approach whose principles are derived of

the practices of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is an eclectic approach

whose principal claim is that the main function of a language is to communicate. In other words,

through the Task-Based Instruction, the principles of CLT, which are related to the promotion of

learning by doing, the necessity of a rich, meaningful, comprehensible and elaborated input,

focus on form-meaning connection, and the importance of feedback, can be brought into the

classroom.

Communicative competence.

In Communicative Language Teaching: Linguistic Theory and Classroom Practice,

Savignon (n.d), states that CLT "refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning" (p,1)

that is, it is crucial to consider what goals are supposed to be achieved. For this case, the main

goal is communication and the identification of the processes that are required to reach the goals.

She also affirms that CLT is directly connected to the Communicative Competence. That is, to

have a CLT classroom it is necessary to bring in practice the components of the Communicative

Competence to have students communicating.

According to Bagaric (2007) Communicative Competence is a concept that has evolved

since the late 1960s. So, defining Communicative Competence required a process until arriving

to an agreement among theoreticians about what Communicative Competence is. However,

some models were proposed by various authors about the components of the Communicative

Competence; for instance, those from Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman and Palmer

(1996) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). For this research, I focus

on the model proposed by the CEFR, which proposes that a competent language user possesses a

series of competences as linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic, which are the ones in which

the Francisco Miranda's English syllabus focuses (p.5).

For the CEFR, all the competences for people to communicate are narrowed in the

competences mentioned above (p.108). According to the CEFR, the linguistic competence is

related to the ability to use the resources of a language to well form and formulate meaningful

messages (p.109). This specific competence is subdivided into lexical competence, grammatical competence, semantic competence, phonological competence; Orthographic competence and orthoepic competence. Subsequently, the sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to deal with the social dimension of language use (p.118). This competence is assessed through the examination of a language user's accuracy of linguistic markers of social relations; politeness conventions; expressions of folk-wisdom; register differences; and dialect and accent. Finally, the pragmatic competence is related to the language user's knowledge of the principles for a message to be organized and structured (discourse competence), conceived for a communicative function (functional competence) and sequenced (design competence) (p.123).

Research Question

How can language curriculum theory be coherent with practice through Task-Based Learning in a third grader's EFL classroom?

General Objective

To explore the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning for the language curriculum theory be coherent with practice in an EFL third grader's classroom.

Specific Objectives.

To review the principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through the implementation of Task-Based Learning approach.

To foster authenticity in teaching-learning processes.

To improve teaching practices by raising awareness of what teaching-learning processes imply.

Action Plan

This Action Plan is a product of a research project carried out at the Institution Educativa Francisco Miranda Sede Julio Arboleda. After having done a series of observations and interventions in a second and third graders' English classes, I noticed a lack of coherence/consistency between what the language curriculum proposes through the English syllabus for teaching-learning English and the real practices in the classroom. Then, to overcome those difficulties that prevent the accomplishment of what the scholar language curriculum proposes, I decided to implement some action strategies based on the principles of Task-Based Learning (TBL).

According to Bagarić (2007), a competent language user should possess not only knowledge about language but also the ability and skill to activate that knowledge in a communicative event; this is to say, language should be used for something. That is why I believe that TBL is an immense help to teach English since TBL allows students to use their skills for accomplishing a specific task, which is authentic, meaningful and purposeful.

Moreover, I consider that the English curriculum of this institution has a relevant purpose in relation to the communicative competences to be applied to English classes, but it is a pity that because of some lack of knowledge and academic training, teachers are not able to accomplish it. That is the reason why I decide to do my bit to make English classes to become, at least in my third graders' classroom, more coherent with the theory and objectives of the school concerning the English syllabus.

Therefore, considering ethical issues, I will meet my second cooperating teacher, in third grade, with the students and their parents to inform them about my research project, and to sign a consent form. Then, my first step is to go in depth about what Task-Based Learning,

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Communicative Competence are and what they imply for an English class. That will be done during the first month when, at the same time, I will make a diagnosis about what students are interested in. In that way, I will be capable to conduct the class by following their principles, and to be coherent with what the English curriculum proposed.

Then, I will select from the English Plan de Area, the contents and topics more related to students' reality and interest; those topics which are more meaningful and appealing to them. After, as the main action, I will create a series of purposeful tasks; tasks connected to students' daily life to get authenticity and to provide students with meaningful activities for them. In that way I will have the students doing something with the language they learned, but something that had some effect or impact in their reality. These tasks will be planned thinking about a period of three months, a task per class since the institution only offered two hours of English class per week.

Besides, I will follow a sequence; that is, the topics will be connected from a class to the next, and so on. In fact, learning a language is a process and a process implies a sequence. Finally, as the final and biggest task during last two weeks, I want the students to make a presentation about "Anglicism" and "International Words"; this is, words taken from English and brought to Spanish and other languages. It would help students to understand the influence of English language in our society, and more in a modern and globalized world.

Consequently, as I must collect data from and during my action plan implementation, I will also refer to the data collection plan that I have in mind. I have learned that a data collection plan is an organized way to describe what, when, where, why and how data will be collected, and

who is going to collect it. Besides, a data collection plan also describes the procedures to obtain relevant and useful information to answer research questions.

Firstly, for this Action Research project, data will be collected through the following instruments: an interview, a journal, two students' task products (written and oral), and a survey. Every instrument have a specific purpose; for example, the interview, the survey and the journal will be used to know the different points of view and perceptions of the research participants and the researcher; and the students' task products will be used to have factual information of the possible effectiveness of the Task-Based Approach to narrow the gap between curriculum theory and classroom practices at the institution.

Secondly, all the data will be collected by the researcher at different points of the investigation. That is, every data collection instrument will be applied at a specific moment during the research; for example, the journal, containing the researcher's class observations and reflections, will be written once per week; that is, one entry per class, every Tuesday from February 20th to May 29th. Besides, regarding tasks, which will be based on syllabus topics, the information provided by them will be collected on March 20th and on April 25th. Finally, the interview to the teacher will be conducted on May 29th.

Finally, with this data collection plan, it will be possible to get, as mentioned above, relevant information about the topic of the research, and it is considered that the selected data collection instruments will be useful to answer the research question: How can language curriculum theory be coherent with practice through Task-Based Learning in a third grader's EFL classroom?

Development of actions

According to my action plan, which was proposed from last year, I planned to implement some action strategies and procedures to deal with a problematic situation concerning the lack of

coherence between what the English syllabus proposes and the actual teaching and learning practices in the classroom. Such strategies and procedures started, at first, with the socialization of the research proposal or the action plan I mentioned above. Then, I asked the students' parents for a consent that allowed their children to participate in the research project. Subsequently, I implemented continuous class observations for further written reflections aiming to write a journal. Besides, during the second month of this year, I made a diagnosis and a review of the English syllabus to define the topics to be worked on in class.

Moreover, I designed and implemented two tasks, one written and one oral followed by a students' final task/presentation about Anglicism and international words. Finally, I conducted an interview to the cooperating teacher to know her insights and perceptions about the dynamics of the class and the methodology implemented, and I also conducted a survey to the students to know their insights about this action research project. This way, I collected all data required for the analysis stage of this action research project.

First, regarding the socialization of the action research proposal, the presentation was made in February. That day, the cooperating teacher and the students were very attentive and willing to know about my proposal, and the good environment of the classroom was a key point for them to understand what I proposed for working along the semester. However, as I had asked the cooperating teacher to commit the students' parents to go to the socialization, their absence was very disappointing for me because I expected more parents' support for the students. In fact, just one mother arrived at the classroom, so the others had to wait for the sending of the consent form to be relatively informed about my research proposal. Then, the week after the socialization I sent the consent form pasted in the students' notebook to the parents, but just 15 of them signed it.

Hence, the classes started while I made the diagnosis about the students' English prior knowledge, and the review of the contents suggested by the syllabus with its objectives to define the topics to work on in the lessons. In fact, I was very attentive to apply the syllabus theory to the classroom practice by implementing the Task-Based approach following its stages to do my lesson plans. Also, I was observing the student's performance all the time to write my journals and reflections. Thus, after every class I wrote and reflected on the dynamics of the lesson aiming at answering the research question.

Subsequently, after some lessons following the principles and procedures proposed by the Task-Based, I implemented the first task, which was written and whose name was "Writing a letter for my teacher". I planned that activity by showing two videos, one in which students could see an example about how to introduce oneself, and other in which they learned how to write a letter. They were provided with a sheet of paper in which they wrote the letter, and the time provided for the activity was enough. Consequently, some students understood and did it very well, but some of them needed clearer explanation and instructions, but finally all of them could finish the written task.

Concerning the second task; that is, the oral, it was more difficult to implement because of its nature and of the time. That is, in that task students had to talk about their family by showing a picture or a drawing of them, but as it was an oral activity, it had to be one by one, what needed a large amount of time. Nonetheless, they finally accomplished it. However, the students' final task/presentation about Anglicism and international word was not possible to conduct because of time constraints because of the pacing and dynamics of the English class.

Finally, the interview to the teacher and the survey to students were conducted and applied the same day. The students were very participative, and they answered all the questions

of the survey appropriately. As they did not have to provide their names, they felt free to be

honest. Subsequently, the interview to the teacher was conducted after the English class, and the

cooperator teacher's willingness and honesty to answer the questions were crucial for the good

development of the interview. From both, the survey and the interview, I was provided with

relevant information for this action research report.

Findings and interpretations

After having observed and implemented a series of classes and conducted an action

research process in a third grade, looking for answering how the language curriculum theory can

be coherent with the practice through Task-Based Learning (TBL), the data for this action

research report was collected through instruments as journals, an interview, a survey and two

students' tasks. The analysis was conducted following the recommendations of Saldaña (2001) in

a manual in which he proposes some procedures to codify and to categorize the data to come up

with theory; which can be understood as concepts (p.11).

First, according to the author, to codify is a process in which the researcher assigns a

code (a word or a short phrase) to different portions of data that provide relevant information for

the research analysis; that is, to group, regroup and relink the data giving them a meaning or

explanation (p.8). Thus, I started to read and listen to my research data to classify and codify the

portions of information that I considered relevant to answer my research question: How can

language curriculum theory be coherent with practice through Task-Based Learning in a third

grader's EFL classroom? Such a process derived in some codes as Task-Based procedures,

teaching strategies, students' difficulties, connection to real life, communication, and discipline

issues.

Subsequently, I grouped some codes into subcategories, to be finally grouped into categories; and some others were linked into categories without being part of a subcategory at first; in any case, the codes pointing out at similar information, meaning and nature were linked into a single subcategory or/and category, as stated by Saldaña (2009) when referring to categories as families of codes that share some characteristic (p.8). From that process, I obtained some subcategories as Communicative Competence to be categorized as Accomplishment of syllabus objectives; and other categories as Task-based process, Students' roles, Teachers' role, and Limitations.

Moreover, I analyzed the categories that could fall into a concept from the theory supporting my action research project, and I grouped them in concepts as Curriculum coherence and Task-Based Learning. Finally, I analyzed the answers and the results of the students' survey and the students' written and oral tasks through a quantitative analysis through technological tools using some forms and schemes to present them. Consequently, after all this process of collection and analysis of the data, I found that TBL is an effective approach when trying to fill the gap existing between theory and practice if both the teacher and the students have in strong consideration of what TBL implies. In the following lines all the findings will be explained in more detail.

Coherence between language curriculum theory and practice

As the general finding and as affirmed in the introductory paragraph of this section, TBL is an effective approach to get coherence between language curriculum theory and practice. In the special case of Francisco Miranda to teach English through TBL, which is one of the methodologies proposed in the syllabus (p.20), it is crucial to consider two big aspects:

1) Lesson planning of all the classes and tasks focused on the contents and objectives proposed by the English syllabus of the institution, as evidenced in the interview to the cooperator teacher when she stated that the topics of the English class were the same of the English syllabus. That way, I could articulate the English syllabus objectives and the classes outcomes, applying what was affirmed by Buchmann and Floden (1990) when stating that coherence is related to connectedness and consistency among elements.

2) Application the TBL principles and procedures to the entire learning process. In fact, to have the students' communicating in English, all the steps and procedures that TBL proposes, as stated by Norris (2009) concerning the four phases of TBL, should be followed in a conscious way, that is, to ensure that every phase of TBL is accomplished during the development of the classes and tasks, as demonstrated in Journal entry 2 when I referred to the necessity of following the stages of TBL, emphasizing on the importance of the Input phase. Consequently, these two big aspects derive in other findings of this action research project.

Accomplishment of the syllabus objectives.

First, concerning the contents selected for English lessons, as stated before, the tasks should be designed by taking into account those proposed by the institutional English syllabus, but the most important aspect is that they have to be interrelated; that is, they have to be taught in a sequential way; that is to say, the topics need to be connected, going from the micro to the macro or vice versa, but maintaining an specific order and sequence, as affirmed by my cooperator teacher in the interview, when she highlighted the connectedness of the English lessons since the topics were sequenced from one class to the next . Moreover, the topics should also be connected to students' interest and necessities; as stated by Nation and Macalister (2010). This can be proved in the students' answer to the question 1 of the survey, in which most of the

students answered that the topics of the classes were interesting for them, as shown in the

picture:

1. Las temáticas de la clase de inglés son interesantes para mí:

17 respuestas

- Siempre
- A veces
- Nunca

88,2% 11,8%
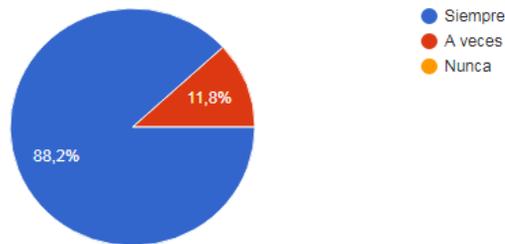
Moreover, as the Francisco Miranda's English syllabus main objective is communication,

every task must promote and pursue the students' communication by focusing on the

communicative competences (p.6). This aspect of the tasks can be proved in the criteria

previously thought to evaluate the tasks:

Criteria for the Written task.

Competencia comunicativa

1. Da información básica de sí mismo(a) y su familia (Pragmático/Funcional)
2. Construye oraciones con sentido (Sintaxis)
3. Utiliza vocabulario apropiado para la tarea (Lexical)

Criteria for the Oral task.

Parámetros Evaluación Oral
**Competencia comunicativa CEFR**

Student:
1. Da información básica de su familia (Pragmático/Funcional)
2. Construye oraciones con sentido (Sintaxis)
3. Utiliza vocabulario apropiado para la tarea (Lexical)
4. Pronuncia cada palabra de manera inteligible (Fonológico)

Consequently, I got students' using the language through a specific vocabulary, in a

specific context and for a specific function, as answered by the students to the sixth question of

the survey:

6. Siento que después de este tiempo de clases con la profesora
17 respuestas
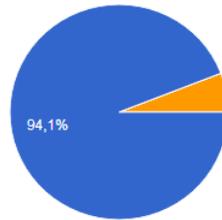
- Puedo dar información, en inglés , de mí mismo(a), de mi familia y del ambiente que me rodea.
- Puedo dar información, en inglés , de mí mismo(a) y de mi familia.
- Solamente puedo dar información, en inglés , de mí mismo(a).
- No me siento en capacidad de dar ningún tipo de información en inglés.

In addition, as the English syllabus of the institution proposes to teach the language in an authentic manner (p.6), and as authenticity is one of the main principles of TBL, it is important to provide the students with authentic contents and contexts, connected to their real lives, as stated by Bagarić (2007). This is proved by the students' answer to the second question of the survey:

2. La profesora propone temas conectados a mi diario vivir:
17 respuestas
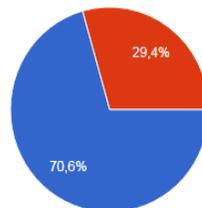
- Siempre
- A veces
- Nunca

Task-Based Learning as an approach to achieve curriculum coherence.

As mentioned before, the main objective of the Francisco's Miranda English syllabus is to have students communicating in English focusing on the communicative competences. Therefore, it was crucial for me, as a teacher, to be aware of the communicative competences that every task was enhancing, developing and being assessed. According to this, through the written task results, and following the recommendations of Mustadi (2012) when suggesting that TBL results should be evaluated in term in outcomes, I noticed that the students developed some

communicative competences as the functional (pragmatic), syntactic (linguistic) and the lexical

with an average of 5, 4.8, and 4, respectively; as shown in the graph 1:

Graph 1.
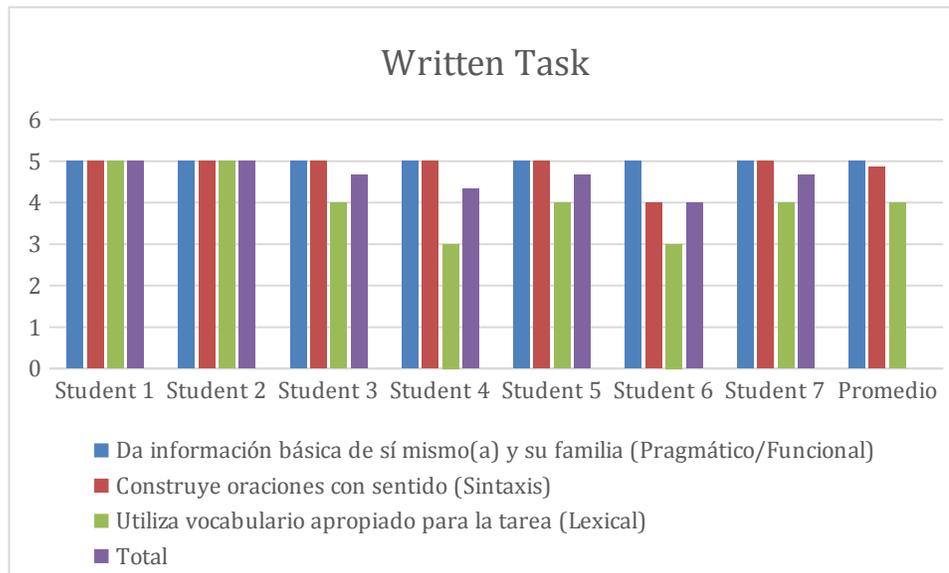
Consequently, regarding the writing skills, the outcomes evidenced that TBL is an

approach that can foster most of the communicative competences that the English syllabus is

intended to develop in the students (p.5). According to the written task results, the students

developed a high pragmatic competence, since they accomplished the communicative purpose of

the task: to talk about their personal information. In fact, the task was called "A letter for my

teacher", in which they must write a letter for their teacher for her to know a little more about

them. Therefore, they must write information as their names, ages, grade, name of the school,

place where they live, and their parents' names and professions. Moreover, the linguistic

competence was also developed as their outcomes were enough to have a good grade, even if

they did not have the highest level concerning the lexical aspect.

As for the oral task, the results were a little different even if the TBL process was like the one for the written task (Journal Entry 9), and the criteria was quite similar. However, the nature of the oral task was different since the students should speak, what increased its difficulty. The oral task results are shown in the graph 2:

Graph 2.
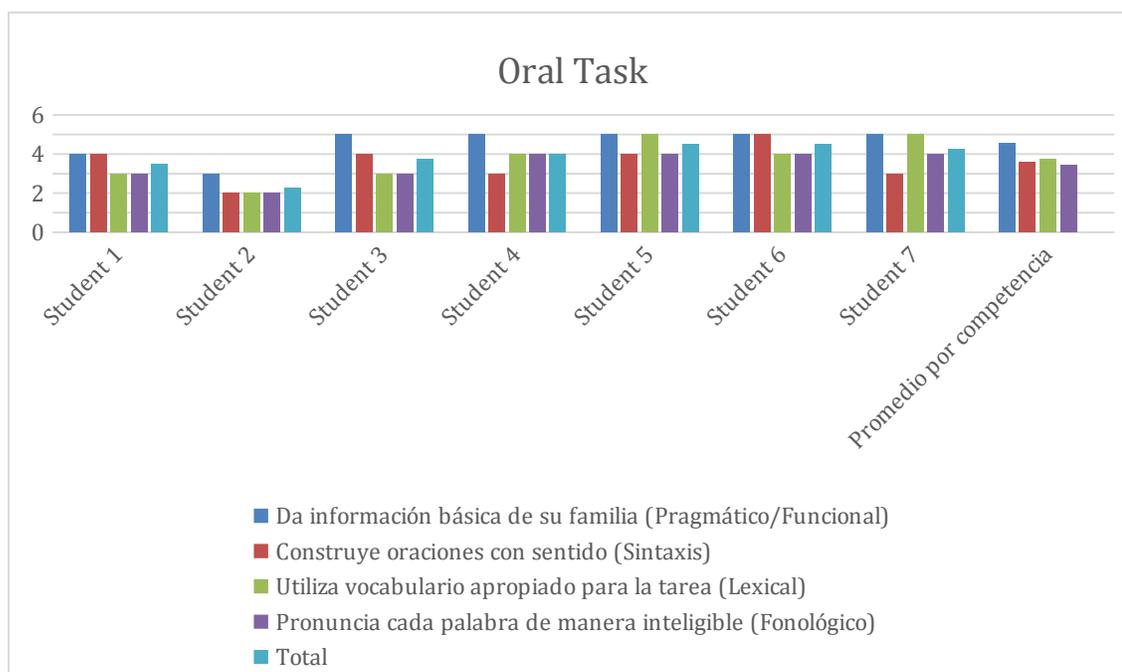
I noticed that students had some difficulties concerning pronunciation (phonology) with an average of 3.4, and construction of sentences (syntax: an average of 3.5), but they could accomplish the general objective of the task, which was to give basic information about their family (pragmatics: an average of 4.5) and to use accurate vocabulary (lexical: an average of 3.7).

Therefore, from these results I interpreted that the TBL process in this context needs to be reinforced regarding oral language development because, as I suggested in my Journal entry 9, the students of this context are not exposed to speaking and listening activities, but just on

writing and reading. In fact, the oral task dynamics were kind of new for them. That is why the written task results were better. However, as affirmed before, the general objective of the task, concerning students' communication (pragmatic/functional competence) was reached, even if the students did not reach linguistic accuracy when speaking (linguistic competence).

Finally, it is important to consider that the pacing of the task sequence and the classes is a key for having better results because, as I suggested in my Journal entry 12, the students can take much time in assimilating the information and/or dynamics of every phase. In fact, they can devote much time as expected in doing the activities. Thus, I understood that many times, one class was not enough to develop a single task. Therefore, it is important to consider this situation when planning the TBL lessons since as stated by Norris (2009), TBL is a process.

Moreover, to improve the TBL results, it is necessary that both teacher and students assume their respective roles; this is to say, that students have an active role, as I suggested in my Journal entry 5 when talking about the students' willingness to work and to ask when necessary, while the teacher should serve as a facilitator and provider of contents, instruction and materials, as seen in my Journal entry 9, when it can be evidenced the responsibility of the teacher to take to the class the contents, activities and material that students should be provided with during the task process.

However, the students' active role should not be an excuse for them to have disruptive behaviors, as stated in my Journal entry 9; in which I noticed that when the teacher trust the students in order to foster their active role, the students can start to create a disruptive environment; therefore, their behavior and discipline should be controlled anyway, as I affirmed in my Journal entry 1, in which I was complaining about the class indiscipline as a factor that can hinder the TBL dynamics and goals.

In other words, TBL needs a good learning environment for students to pay attention and assimilate what they must do and how to do it, as claimed by the teacher in the interview when referring to the necessity of promoting a disciplined environment to help the process to be more successful. In fact, a good strategy for me to have my students engaged and with a good behavior was to show them videos and e-books, as demonstrated in my Journal entry 6, in which I affirmed that students love videos, and that it was an appropriate tool to keep them disciplined and concentrated.

Conclusions

After all this action research process, I found that TBL is an effective approach for the institutional practices be coherent with the curriculum theory if well conducted and assumed by both, teachers and students. In fact, through TBL was possible to accomplish the language curriculum objectives, which are directly related to language communication and founded on the development of communicative competences. Nevertheless, it is crucial for teachers to apply the TBL principles and procedures to the entire learning process, following and implementing all the phases proposed by different authors, as Norris (2009). Therefore, teachers need to bear in mind that as TBL is a process, it needs to be sequenced and well-paced.

However, some limitations were found related to time constraints and discipline issues. First, the time for this action research was short, and as TBL implies some different procedures and pacing, it was not possible for me to do all what I planned. Thus, the main concern is not the nature of the TBL process, but the time for this action research implementation. However, the main objective of this action research project was reached, but with more time, I am certain that we would obtain better results, especially with oral tasks.

Finally, the necessity of promoting a good learning environment when conducting TBL is relevant because disruptive behaviors can frustrate the TBL process and results. Hence, both situations time constraints and discipline issues are both, an opportunity and a suggestion for other researchers to explore the effectiveness of the TBL approach for promoting good learning environment using appropriate strategies, as well as for linguistic purposes.

Reflections

This action research process was a new experience in my life. In fact, I have learned some important new things at two levels, personal and professional. Moreover, at this point, this process provides me with the knowledge and authority to give my recommendations and suggestions for those who are about to start an action research study. In the following lines I will extend all these words.

First, from this action research project, at a personal level, I learned that we can change our minds and that we can give ourselves the opportunity to do it. When I learned that I had to teach children, I was totally discouraged; I felt myself as not able to do it because of my personality. I did not know what I could do for them. However, along the process I discovered that I could do many things and do them very well. In fact, I understood that many times we just must see the things from within, because to see them from outside cannot tell us something relevant. We must enter the others' world to better know them and to better know yourself, too.

Similarly, at a professional level, I learned that our work as teachers goes beyond the classroom. It has a social impact that, maybe, we cannot imagine. Moreover, I understood the relevance of that we, as teachers, can improve the dynamics of our context, that we are not forced to give up when facing a problematic situation. In fact, with some effort and training on the ways and strategies to overcome the situation, we can provide ourselves and our students

with a better teaching and learning environment. Finally, how important for teachers can theorize their practice. It is a way to demonstrate our knowledge and professionalism, and it is also an enriching way to help others with deal with similar situations.

Then, for those who are about to start an action research process, I must tell them: Do not give up. I must admit that it takes time and efforts, but at the end you will corroborate that you are able to do better things, that things can change, and we can change with them. It is a matter of willingness and discipline, even if at the very beginning you do not know what and how to do, you will learn it along the way. Do not worry, you can do it.

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Appendix A

Written task (Lesson plan)

Topic: Introducing myself and others **(WRITING TASK called "A letter for my teacher")**

Students will be able to:

- Talk about their personal and relatives' names, ages, birthdays and places where they live, and they belong to show what they have learned throughout the first period.

- Conjugate Verb to be with the first and third person of the singular form.

PROCEDURES

Warm up: Preparation of the students for the task by explaining what the dynamics of it is going to be.

Stage 1: Video of a girl's self-introduction talking about personal and family information.

Stage 2: Video about how to write a letter (5 components of a letter: City and date, greeting, body of the letter, a little drawing, and signature). It is helpful to draw a letter example on the whiteboard following the instructions from the video.

Production Stage: Students have an hour to write the letter including the topics and the components required.

Observations:

The purposes of this activity are:
- To encourage children to communicate in English through writing.
- To identify strengths and weaknesses on previous topics.

I did not have much time to do the closure part, but it can be conducted by allowing some students to read the letter aloud and having a little discussion about how difficult it was to write the letter.

Appendix B

Oral task (Lesson plan)

LESSON PLAN

Place: I.E. Francisco Miranda Sede Julio Arboleda
Date: Tuesday, April 24th
Number of students: 35
Time: 100 min
Materials: Computer, whiteboard, students' notebooks, audio recorder.
Topic: Family information.

NAME OF THE TASK: *Telling you something about my family.*

OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess students' oral performance when talking about their family (family members with their name, age and profession (optional)).

2. To reinforce students' knowledge about family members vocabulary and use of verb "to be" for the third person of singular.

PROCEDURES
WARM UP: Review the vocabulary about family members by showing some pictures on the computer and asking the students Who is this?

INPUT PHASE: Show a video in which a child is introducing his/her family. Repeat what s/he said for students better to comprehend. Write the script on the whiteboard and repeat it again.

PREPARATION FOR THE TASK: Ask the students to make a drawing of their family. If they bring a photography, the drawing is not necessary.