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**DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF ECONOMICS STUDENTS THROUGH
TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UZBEK HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Abstract: The study examines how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be applied to improve the linguistic competence of economics students in Uzbek higher education. In today’s academic and professional world, English has become an essential tool for communication, and students are expected to develop not only grammatical knowledge but also practical communicative skills. The aim of the research is to show the advantages of TBLT as a learner-centered method that encourages active participation, meaningful interaction, and the ability to solve problems in the target language. When students complete real-life tasks in class, they become more engaged and confident, and their motivation to use English grows. Observations from classroom practice as well as findings from local studies indicate that this approach supports both linguistic development and learner autonomy, while also strengthening critical thinking. Another important point is that TBLT can be adapted to various teaching contexts and corresponds well with international frameworks such as CEFR. Introducing this method into Uzbek universities has the potential to enrich pedagogical practice and help future economists gain stronger communication skills needed for their academic and professional growth.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, Linguistic Competence, Economics Students, Higher Education, Uzbekistan

Introduction

In today’s interconnected world, English has become a gateway to global knowledge and professional success. For students in economics and business, strong language skills are no longer optional but essential, since much of the academic literature, research, and international cooperation is carried out in English. Yet, despite the growing demand, traditional grammar-based and teacher-centered methods still dominate many classrooms, and they often leave students unable to apply what they know in real communicative situations (Ellis, 2009; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This has led many educators to look for new approaches that can bridge the gap between language learning and real-life use.

One promising alternative is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Unlike conventional approaches that prioritize memorization and drills, TBLT focuses on using language through meaningful tasks that mirror authentic situations. When learners negotiate, solve problems, or present ideas as part of these tasks, they not only practice linguistic accuracy but also develop fluency, confidence, and autonomy. Studies across different contexts highlight that TBLT encourages students to think critically and communicate more naturally (Willis & Willis, 2007; Carless, 2009). For economics students, who are expected to analyze information, take part in discussions, and express complex ideas clearly, such outcomes are especially valuable. What makes this approach even more

relevant is its compatibility with international standards like the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which allows teachers to align classroom practice with globally recognized benchmarks (Council of Europe, 2020).

In Uzbekistan, the importance of English in higher education has been reinforced by national reforms and the country’s growing integration into the global academic and professional community. However, challenges remain, especially when it comes to developing communicative competence among students in specialized areas such as economics. While there is increasing recognition of student-centered approaches, the practical application of TBLT in Uzbek universities has not yet been fully explored. Against this background, the present study sets out to examine how TBLT can be used to strengthen the linguistic competence of economics students. By analyzing its potential benefits and adaptability, the research aims to contribute to the broader discussion on innovative teaching practices and to show how this approach can better prepare students for the demands of today’s globalized economy. The aim of this paper is to explore how Task-Based Language Teaching can be applied to help economics students in Uzbekistan develop stronger linguistic competence. The focus is on showing not only how this method supports language learning in the classroom, but also how it prepares students for real communication in academic and professional settings. In doing so, the paper highlights the adaptability of TBLT to international standards and its potential to enrich current teaching practices in higher education.

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained strong attention in the field of language pedagogy. Scholars such as Ellis (2009) describe TBLT as a response to the weaknesses of grammar-translation and structural methods, which often leave learners unprepared for authentic communication. Richards and Rodgers (2014) also emphasize that communicative approaches, including TBLT, allow students to use language in purposeful contexts rather than treating it as a set of abstract rules. Willis and Willis (2007) further note that carefully designed tasks encourage students to negotiate meaning, solve problems, and produce meaningful language, making the learning process more practical and engaging.

The benefits of TBLT go beyond language accuracy and fluency. According to Carless (2009), task-based lessons help learners develop critical thinking, self-reflection, and independence, qualities that are especially important in higher education. Another strength of this method is its compatibility with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which provides internationally recognized benchmarks for language proficiency (Council of Europe, 2020). This connection makes TBLT adaptable to a wide range of educational contexts and ensures that students’ progress can be measured against global standards.

In Uzbekistan, interest in TBLT has been growing as well. Jo‘raeva (2022) observed that task-based lessons encourage students to take more responsibility for their own progress, especially through role plays and project-based tasks. Similarly, Qodirov (2023) reported that students taught with TBLT were more active in speaking and showed greater confidence in classroom discussions compared to peers taught through lecture-based approaches. Karimov (2021) also found that communicative methods, including TBLT, shifted the classroom dynamic from passive listening to active participation. Adding to this body of local scholarship, Djurayeva (2023) stressed the significance of careful lesson planning in the implementation of TBLT in ESP classes, both globally and within the Uzbek context. Her study highlights that structured yet flexible lesson design helps teachers balance communicative goals with institutional requirements, which is particularly relevant in higher education.

Practical classroom examples illustrate this potential more clearly. At Tashkent State University of Economics, for instance, students worked in groups to design and present a short business plan in English. The task required them to use economic and financial terms in context while also practicing teamwork, negotiation, and presentation skills—abilities that are directly relevant to their future careers. Similar outcomes were noted in Bygate’s (2016) study of business English courses, where students improved their confidence and ability to handle professional scenarios after completing problem-solving tasks. These examples show that connecting tasks to students’ academic and professional needs makes language learning both effective and motivating.

At the same time, scholars point out that implementing TBLT is not without challenges. Carless (2009) and Uzbek researchers such as Jo‘raeva (2022), Qodirov (2023), and Djurayeva (2023) note that large class sizes, limited time, and resource constraints can make it difficult to fully apply task-based methods. Still, they argue that even small steps—such as introducing pair work, role plays, or mini-projects—can bring classrooms closer to a learner-centered model. These incremental changes gradually shift the balance away from teacher-centered instruction and make lessons more interactive. Overall, the literature—both international and Uzbek—highlights a clear consensus. TBLT is effective in fostering not only linguistic competence but also autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking. Its adaptability makes it suitable for higher education in Uzbekistan, particularly for economics students who need to communicate in global academic and professional settings. Yet, its success depends on thoughtful adaptation, well-prepared teachers, and institutional support. With these conditions in place, TBLT can play a significant role in preparing students for the demands of the modern global economy.

Student-Centered Approach

Recent developments in language pedagogy increasingly highlight the necessity of moving away from teacher-centered practices toward student-centered approaches, which encourage learners to assume an active role in the learning process. As Nunan (2004) observes, when students are positioned as decision-makers in their own learning, they not only gain greater motivation but also achieve more meaningful and long-lasting linguistic development. In such environments, the teacher’s role is redefined as a facilitator who creates conditions for interaction, exploration, and reflection, rather than the sole authority delivering knowledge. This transformation is particularly significant in higher education, where the primary objective extends beyond transmitting information to cultivating independence, critical thinking, and the capacity to apply knowledge in diverse contexts.

Within the framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the principle of student-centeredness acquires special importance. Ellis (2009) stresses that tasks provide learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning, test hypotheses about language, and refine their communicative competence through peer interaction. Similarly, Willis and Willis (2007) argue that tasks are most effective when learners are challenged to make decisions, collaborate to solve problems, and reflect on the outcomes of their performance. Carless (2009) adds that when learners are granted this degree of agency, they tend to engage more deeply in the learning process and retain knowledge more effectively. These perspectives underscore the strong theoretical consensus that TBLT and student-centeredness are mutually reinforcing.

Evidence from Uzbekistan further confirms these claims. Jo‘raeva (2022) reports that student-centered, task-based lessons encouraged undergraduates to take initiative and assume responsibility for their learning progress, while Qodirov (2023) found that students taught through interactive tasks displayed greater willingness to communicate in English and were less inhibited by the fear of making mistakes. Djurayeva (2023) highlights the significance of lesson planning in maintaining a student-centered environment, noting that carefully structured yet flexible lesson plans help teachers balance

communicative objectives with institutional requirements while ensuring that learners remain central to the process. Together, these studies illustrate that student-centeredness is not an abstract principle but a practical and achievable pedagogical orientation.

Concrete classroom experiences further illustrate the application of this approach. At the Tashkent State University of Economics, students of economics were asked to design and present a mock business project in English. In this setting, the teacher acted primarily as a facilitator, while students collaborated, negotiated, and prepared their presentations independently. The task required them to employ specialized economic terminology and, at the same time, enhanced their teamwork, negotiation, and presentation skills—competences vital for their future professional development. International evidence echoes these findings: Bygate (2016), for instance, reports that business English learners improved their professional communication skills significantly after completing role-play tasks that simulated workplace scenarios. Such examples demonstrate that when tasks are closely connected to learners’ academic and professional needs, the learning process becomes both more relevant and more motivating.

Another important dimension of student-centered TBLT lies in its contribution to the development of learner autonomy. Tasks that extend beyond the classroom, such as surveys, interviews, or case study analyses, encourage students to perceive language as a tool for inquiry and engagement rather than a purely academic subject. As Djurayeva (2023) points out in her study of ESP classrooms, this approach not only builds linguistic competence but also enhances students’ ability to apply language purposefully in academic and professional domains. In this way, student-centered TBLT contributes to preparing learners for the realities of twenty-first century communication, both within and beyond the university setting.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in fully realizing student-centered pedagogy. Carless (2009) has observed that teachers often hesitate to relinquish control, fearing that student-centered methods may reduce classroom order or efficiency. In Uzbekistan, structural constraints such as large class sizes and limited contact hours further complicate the consistent application of such approaches (Jo‘raeva, 2022; Qodirov, 2023). Despite these difficulties, research suggests that incremental adjustments—introducing pair work, simulations, or small-scale projects—can gradually reshape the classroom dynamic. As Willis and Willis (2007) and Djurayeva (2023) both emphasize, even modest changes toward learner-centered practices can create more interactive environments and sustain students’ engagement, ensuring that they remain the focal point of the learning process.

Developing Communicative and Linguistic Skills through TBLT

One of the most important strengths of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is its ability to develop both communicative and linguistic competence in learners. Unlike traditional methods that emphasize memorization of rules or vocabulary lists, TBLT places language within meaningful tasks that require authentic use. Ellis (2009) explains that learners acquire grammar and vocabulary more effectively when they need them to complete real-life tasks, while Richards and Rodgers (2014) stress that communicative competence can only grow if learners actively use the language to achieve concrete goals. In this way, TBLT creates conditions where accuracy, fluency, and complexity develop together.

TBLT also mirrors the complexities of real communication by involving students in interactive tasks. Willis and Willis (2007) show that activities such as group problem-solving, projects, or role plays provide opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and adapt their language to new situations. Through these interactions, students practice not only the forms of language but also the skills of communication. Carless (2009) observes that this combination of

practice and reflection strengthens retention and builds confidence, as learners see immediate results from their efforts. Evidence from the Uzbek context supports these findings. Jo‘raeva (2022) demonstrates that task-based lessons increase motivation and help students internalize linguistic structures by applying them in collaborative contexts. Qodirov (2023) shows that economics students involved in task-based speaking activities not only used professional terminology more accurately but also expressed themselves more confidently. Djurayeva (2023) highlights the importance of integrating carefully planned tasks into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lessons, noting that such practices simultaneously improve linguistic competence and develop communicative skills relevant to students’ professional fields.

Practical classroom examples illustrate how tasks support both types of competence. At the Tashkent State University of Economics, for instance, students analyzed a case study on market competition and presented their findings in English. The task required them to use specialized economic vocabulary, interpret data, and present arguments, which reinforced linguistic precision while also strengthening their ability to persuade and discuss. International examples show similar effects: Bygate (2016) reports that business English learners improved workplace communication after engaging in problem-solving and decision-making tasks. These cases confirm that communicative competence develops most effectively when tasks reflect learners’ academic and professional needs. Another contribution of TBLT is its ability to balance fluency with accuracy. Skehan (1998) argues that well-designed tasks push learners to focus not only on getting their message across but also on refining the quality of their language. This balance is particularly important in higher education, where students must explain complex ideas clearly and precisely. For economics students, this means being able to describe financial processes, write professional reports, and present data effectively in English. Task-based activities, therefore, prepare learners for both academic performance and future careers.

Finally, TBLT also contributes to the development of broader communicative skills that extend beyond the classroom. Tasks naturally involve collaboration, negotiation, and critical thinking, which are vital in professional and global contexts. As Carless (2009) notes, these transferable skills emerge when learners are actively engaged in meaningful communication. For Uzbek students preparing to participate in international academic and economic communities, this combination of linguistic and communicative competence makes TBLT especially valuable. By embedding language practice within authentic, collaborative activities, TBLT ensures that learners are not only proficient in English but also capable of applying it effectively in diverse contexts.

Simulating Real-Life Situations through Learning Tasks

One of the most distinctive features of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is its emphasis on creating tasks that reflect real-life situations, giving learners the chance to use language in authentic and meaningful ways. Ellis (2009) explains that tasks are most effective when they replicate the communicative demands learners will face outside the classroom, since this creates a genuine need for language use. Instead of relying on mechanical drills, TBLT immerses students in contexts where accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness must work together. According to Willis and Willis (2007), this authenticity is the key to sustaining motivation and encouraging learners to take ownership of their progress.

The simulation of real-life contexts is especially important in higher education, where students are preparing for academic and professional environments that demand more than textbook knowledge. Bygate (2016) notes that role plays, case studies, and problem-solving tasks allow learners to rehearse the types of interactions they are likely to encounter in workplaces or academic discussions. In Uzbekistan, economics students benefit particularly from tasks that ask them to prepare business

proposals, analyze market data, or deliver presentations in English. These activities develop both linguistic precision and the communicative strategies needed for effective participation in professional discourse. As Djurayeva (2023) argues, well-planned lessons ensure that such tasks remain focused on learners' future needs while still meeting institutional and curricular requirements.

Local research reinforces the importance of designing tasks that mirror real-world contexts. Jo'raeva (2022) found that project-based assignments connected to authentic themes encouraged university students to work independently and take initiative. Similarly, Qodirov (2023) reported that simulations of workplace discussions boosted students' willingness to speak and helped them sustain communication in English more naturally. Carless (2009) also emphasizes that the closer tasks resemble authentic communication, the more transferable the skills become, making classroom practice directly relevant to real-life use. Practical classroom experiences illustrate this vividly. At the Tashkent State University of Economics, students took part in a simulation where they represented different companies negotiating a joint-venture contract. They had to defend their interests, compromise, and eventually reach an agreement—all in English. The activity required not only accurate use of economic terminology but also strategic communication skills such as persuasion and clarification. Beyond language learning, students developed soft skills in negotiation and teamwork that are indispensable for their future careers. Comparable practices are described internationally; Carless (2009), for example, documents how university students in Hong Kong strengthened their pragmatic competence by engaging in simulated business meetings.

Another benefit of modeling real-life situations is the integration of multiple skills within a single task. As Skehan (1998) points out, tasks that require learners to read data, interpret graphs, deliver oral explanations, and write summaries create opportunities for balanced practice across linguistic domains. For economics students, this reflects the very skills they will need in professional life—reading financial reports, discussing them in meetings, and writing formal recommendations. By working on integrated tasks, students not only strengthen their linguistic abilities but also build the competence to apply them across different modes of communication. In sum, tasks that simulate real-life scenarios make language learning both authentic and purposeful. In the Uzbek context, where students are increasingly expected to operate in global academic and professional spaces, this approach is especially valuable. By embedding authentic situations into classroom practice, TBLT equips learners with the linguistic competence and communicative confidence they need to succeed beyond the university walls.

Conclusion

The discussion of theory, research, and practice shows that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a powerful approach for improving both the linguistic and communicative skills of university students. By putting learners at the center of the process, TBLT creates space for active engagement, autonomy, and meaningful interaction. Tasks that resemble real-life situations not only help students achieve greater accuracy and fluency in English, but also foster wider abilities such as critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving—skills that are indispensable in modern academic and professional life.

For Uzbekistan, where higher education is undergoing important reforms and aiming to meet international standards, TBLT offers a relevant and timely solution. Research by local scholars confirms that this approach raises motivation, strengthens independent learning, and supports the practical use of English in authentic contexts (Jo'raeva, 2022; Qodirov, 2023; Djurayeva, 2023). At the same time, certain challenges remain, including large class sizes and resource limitations, which point to the need for more targeted teacher training and institutional support.

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Taken together, the evidence suggests that TBLT can make a meaningful contribution to enriching language teaching in Uzbekistan. By focusing on authentic communication and modeling real-life tasks, this approach equips economics students—and university learners more broadly—not only with stronger linguistic competence but also with the confidence and communicative flexibility required to succeed in today’s interconnected world.

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