Implementing the Task-Based Learning Approach In Teaching Linguistics to First Year University Students

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Résumé

Communicative language teaching has given birth to a number of approaches that share the same basic principles, but which spell out different instructional principles. These approaches include Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Task-Based Learning (TBL). They are based on the premises that language learning is a cognitive process where the learner is viewed as an active participant in the learning process and the teacher as a facilitator and monitor. Bearing in mind these principles when teaching the module of Linguistics, we have tried to design a linguistics lesson following the task-based approach, in which we integrate the teaching of linguistic content and language.

Keywords :

Communicative language teaching - content-based instruction - task based learning - syllabus design.

الملخّص

انبثقت عن المقاربة التبليغية عدّة مناهج تشترك في مبادئ أساسية ولكنها تختلف في مبادئها التدريسية، ونذكر من بينها المقاربة التي تعتمد على المحتوى (CBI) والمقاربة القائمة على المهام (TBL). تعتبر هذه المناهج التعلم سيرورة معرفية يلعب من خلالها المتعلم دور المشارك النشط والفعال في عملية التعلم. أما المعلم فيُتوقّع منه أن يكون بمثابة المراقب والميسّر والمحفّز. وبالاعتماد على كل هذه المبادئ حاولنا تصميم درس في اللّسانيات موجه لطلبة السنة الأولى -ليسانس اللغة الانجليزية- مرتكزين على التدريس من خلال المهام لتعليم محتوى المادة بالإضافة إلى تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفاتيح :

المقاربة التبليغية - المقاربة التي تعتمد على المحتوى - المقاربة التي تعتمد على المهام - اعداد البرامج.

Résumé

La méthode communicative est une des principales méthodologies de la didactique des langues. Elle a donné naissance à un certain nombre d'approches qui partagent les mêmes principes de base, mais qui diffèrent dans leurs principes d'instruction. Ces approches incluent l'instruction basée sur le contenu et l'apprentissage à base de tâches. Ces tâches considèrent l'apprentissage comme un processus cognitif où l'apprenant est un participant actif dans le processus d'apprentissage et l'enseignant est considéré comme un facilitateur et un moniteur. En prenant en considération ces principes, nous avons essayé de concevoir une leçon de linguistique selon l'approche à base de tâches, dans laquelle nous avons intégré l'enseignement du contenu du module et l'enseignement de la langue anglaise.

Keywords :

La méthode communicative - l'instruction basée sur le contenu - l'apprentissage à base de tâches - élaboration de programmes d'enseignement.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with the benefits of using task-based activities in the teaching of a content-based course, namely linguistics, to EFL First Year students in the English Department at the University of Algiers II.

Linguistics is not a subject that has been previously taught in secondary education, which implies that for First Year students, linguistics is a new subject. And studying a new subject in a new environment (the university) and above all in a foreign language constitutes a hard task for students.

Students in the linguistics course are required to be active listeners, they need to listen carefully to lectures, they are also expected to take notes, to plan and write assignments to exercise their skills by assessing evidence, developing and evaluating arguments, and expressing their views. In addition, they have to learn from reading material, they must be active and thinking participants in the process. Reading is considered by Dole et al. (1991) as a critical foundation skill for academic learning and many employment skills; Scarcella and Oxford (1992) regard it as being the key to success in higher education. Consequently, in the suggested lesson, the text-based tasks are meant to challenge and stimulate the students intellectually and to help them grasp successfully the linguistic content while working in a contextualised framework. We also attempt to promote students' interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning. Students ought to be active and are encouraged to ask for knowledge, seek clarification, express ideas, agree or disagree with peers and the teacher, and are guided to go beyond memorised patterns (Kumaravedivelu, 1993).

2. Description of The First Year Linguistics Syllabus

The First Year Linguistics course consists of an introduction to the various issues in General Linguistics. The course's main objective is to initiate students to some fundamental linguistic terminology and concepts that will constitute a basis for the following years. The First Year Linguistics Syllabus covers the following sections: The general characteristics of linguistics, its different components and its main branches. The First Year Linguistics Syllabus is set by the Official programme of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as follows:

A. Basic Concepts in Linguistics:

- Approaches to language
- Features and procedures of linguistics
- Features of human language
- Human and animal "languages"

B. Levels and Branches of Linguistics:

- Phonetics
- Phonology
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Applied linguistics
- Psycholinguistics
- Sociolinguistics

In this paper, we suggest to develop lessons for the first year linguistics syllabus, following the task-based approach. Thus, we start by explaining this approach and the benefits of its implementation in a content-based module such as Linguistics, and then we present as an example one lesson related to the first topic in the syllabus, i.e., Approaches to language.

3. Task-Based Learning

Richards & Rodgers (2001) define Task- Based Learning (TBL) as:

> "an approach based on the use of tasks as a core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. It targets to create a problem-solving environment which provides a more realistic approach to learning and facilitates an educational methodology emphasising real world challenges, higher order thinking skills, multidisciplinary learning, independent learning, group work and communication skills". (223)

Task-based learning covers two distinct areas: 1) task-based syllabus design, which is concerned with task selection and sequencing; and 2) task-based language teaching (TBLT), which is concerned with how to teach tasks. The different task-based approaches share the common idea that task-based learning is not just about getting learners to do one task and then another and then another. In this way, language is just presented to learners as a sequence

of controllably practised structures leading them to be accurate rather than fluent. These task-based approaches are all based on the belief that asking learners to perform tasks rather than learning items will promote the natural language learning process.

Willis (1996) outlines a model that offers *"a holistic language experience where learners carry out a communication task, using the language they have learnt from previous lessons or from other sources"* (134). She defines task as being: "a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome" (55). All tasks should have a specified objective that must be achieved. They are goal-oriented, and the purposeful activity in which students engage in completing a task should lead towards a product. Language is the vehicle for attaining task goals, but the emphasis is on meaning and communication, not on producing language forms correctly.

The Task-Based model is designed to meet students' various needs and consists, according to Willis (1996), of three phases:

> "The pre-task phase introduces the class to the topic and the task, activating topic-related words and phrases. The task cycle offers learners the chance to use whatever language they already know in order to carry out the task, and then to improve that language under teacher guidance, while planning their reports of the task ... the last phase in the framework, language focus, allows a closer study of some of the specific features naturally occurring in the language used during the task cycle." (40)

This model or framework can be adapted to all teaching situations. It gives the learner the opportunity to focus on form and meaning during the three stages of the 'task cycle'. Task-based activities provide learners with an environment that may promote language learning process by engaging them in meaningful activities. Nunan (2003) refers to the task' s major goal in the following:

> "Task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form." (10)

Task-based learning is concerned with learner and not teacher activity and it relies on the teacher to produce and supply different tasks which will give the learner the opportunity to understand the course content and to

experiment the foreign language. For Skehan (1996), "a task-based approach sees the learning process as of learning through doing" (19). There are various reasons for emphasising learning by doing: students generally find that doing something, i.e. being active, is more interesting than being told about it, in other words being passive. We assume that if students use their own resources to solve problems, their understanding will be more thorough, and they are more likely to retain what they have learned. It is only when students put something into practice that any incorrect or imperfect learning is revealed, and it is revealed to the students themselves and to the teacher.

For Nunan (2003), "tasks are typically activities that can stand alone as fundamental units, but we believe that it is valuable to link tasks together through a common theme." (16). Thus, we advocate the combination of task-based instruction with a given theme or content (CBI).

Professionals in different instructional contexts developing approaches to Content Based Instruction (CBI) recognize the benefits of integrating language and content instruction for language students. The suggested approaches vary as they represent different assumptions about content, language and learning strategies. However, these approaches to CBI uniformly consider and regard language as a tool for learning content, and content as a source and a meaningful context for learning language.

Content-based instruction refers to an approach that integrates language instruction with content instruction, but which allows the content to determine the nature and order of the linguistic syllabus (Brinton et al. 2003). It is associated with the genesis of language immersion in Canada in 1965. The CBI has been defined as the integration of a particular content with language teaching goals. It is based on the principle that successful language learning occurs when students are presented with target language material in a meaningful, contextualised form, with the primary focus on mastering information and knowledge.

Brinton et al. (2003) consider that content based approaches *"view the target language largely as the vehicle through which subject matter content is learned rather than as the immediate object of study."* (5). Scarcella & Oxford (1992) criticise the teaching of content in isolation, in the absence of the skills by arguing that such an approach would not ensure adequate preparation for future success in academic communication, a career related to language use, or everyday

interaction in the language. Consequently, the focus of the second/ foreign language classroom should be on something meaningful, such as academic content and the modification of the target language material helps students to acquire the language and makes the academic content accessible to learners.

Pally (2000) believes that content-based instruction lends itself to the incorporation of a variety of thinking skills and learning strategies which lead to rich language development, e.g. information gathering skills (absorbing, questioning), organising skills, (categorising, comparing, representing), analysing skills (identifying main ideas, identifying attributes and components, identifying relationships), generating skills (inferring, predicting, estimating).

Brinton et al. (2003) believe that optimal conditions for learning a language occur when language is used as a medium for studying subject matter. Content-based instruction is based on the principle that successful language learning results from presenting learners with the target language material in a meaningful and a contextualised form. The content offers the context for learning language skills. It becomes the organising principle for selecting the language structures, vocabulary and functions.

4. The Goals from the Designed TBL Lesson

The designed TBL Lesson is meant to:

- First, increase students' exposure to the target language in use because exposure is one condition for language learning. Exposure involves students trying to make sense of whatever they hear and read. For Williw (1996), "It is essential that learners are ultimately exposed to the variety of language they will need to understand and use outside the classroom. This might be language they will need in order to study other subjects, to use at work, or for pleasures" (12). The type of exposure is also important in the field of language learning, priority is given to the quality of the exposure rather than the quantity. To put it differently, exposure to limited, simplified texts, and scripted dialogues is not enough, students need to be exposed to a variety of types of language use and different kinds of writing.
- Second, increase students' interest and motivation by providing them with the opportunity to interact meaningfully with the subject matter (linguistics). Willis (1996) considers that motivation is an important and essential condition for learning: "Success and satisfaction are key factors in sustaining motivation. If students feel they have achieved something

worthwhile, through their own individual effort, they are more likely to participate the next time" (14). That is why teachers should set achievable goals, and accentuate students' success.

- Third, intensify students' production of the target language. If students are aware that in class they will be expected to make use of the target language, they will pay more attention to what they hear and read, and to process the language they are exposed to more analytically, noticing the different features of language. It is believed that students need opportunities to communicate what they want to say, and express what they think, using language for clear pre-set purposes.
- Fourth, give students the opportunity to work in groups and to use whatever linguistic resources they possess to achieve the goals of the task. Slavins' research (reported in Grabe & Stoller, 2002), has demonstrated strong improvements on student learning when students work in groups that have structured objectives, have group goals and rewards. When several leaners work in a group and pool their abilities, they will normally be able to contribute all the elements necessary to complete the task. This pooling of abilities, and the discussion that arises during the task, will gradually strengthen students' language skills.

5. Designing a Linguistics Lesson Following the Task-Based Learning Approach

Below are some principles that we paid attention to when designing the Linguistics lesson:

(i) The lesson must not be 'too' theoretical. Linguistics may seem difficult and abstract for First Year students. For this reason, in the construction of our lesson, practice is much more emphasised. Language is subtle and complex mainly because it involves an interrelation of different linguistic levels such as syntax, phonology, morphology, discourse, etc., and each level has its own structure and organisation. Corder (1982) refers to the difficulty of linguistics as follows:

"The question of the difficulty of linguistics is worth closer consideration. Linguistics requires abstract conceptualisation, systematic thinking and attention to detail. Human beings have a head start in linguistics compared with academic subjects because of access to their intuitions about language. It uses far too much and too varied terminology." (Corder 1982: 22)

We expect our students to learn and understand linguistics through doing, i.e. reading texts, extracting meaning, manipulating information, and performing activities in groups. In other words we want our students to discover the elements of language and to use language for the expression of meaning, i.e. linguistic knowledge gained from practice. Instead of receiving information and applying it as directed (Rivers 1985). Supplying students with abstract theories and rules without fully practising them may decrease their interest and motivation.

Taking into consideration the students' need for more practice in the linguistics course, we tried to set reading tasks that may bring students to discover, understand, practise and retain the different linguistic concepts and principles by themselves. Furthermore, students are supplied with pictures (visual aids) to facilitate their comprehension of some difficult abstract concepts. We aim at creating an environment that privileges students' interaction and communication, students are encouraged to illustrate their comprehension of the knowledge they gain from their readings and to apply that knowledge when completing the tasks.

(ii) The teaching of the four language skills, i.e. reading, listening, speaking, and writing, we hold the view that each skill deserves practice within an integrated-skill framework. Language is regarded as the instrument through which students understand linguistic content.

Students are encouraged to develop their confidence in speaking. They are given the opportunity to negotiate information among each other, and to develop their interactional skills. In all the suggested units, students are divided into groups, and the members of the groups discuss orally the possible answers, they exchange and negotiate information acquired from the texts they are given. When doing the task, members of the groups listen to others suggestions and answers to sort out one possible answer. Besides, at a given stage, representatives of the different groups are required to present and read orally their reports, and others listen.

The suggested lesson consists of text-based tasks that compel students to process the text for extracting meaning and manipulating it. Brinton et al. (2003) consider that when students acquire information through sophisticated linguistic input, they move to more advanced levels of language processing. They believe that texts facilitate the development of English language skills

through activities that help students to acquire background information in the content area and subsequently provide them with the opportunity to discuss, analyse, extend, and apply concepts presented in the readings. The writing skill follows listening and reading. Students are expected to synthesize facts, ideas and to write their answers in the form of a report. They are also expected to take notes when listening to their peers' reports.

(iii) Students are expected to complete the different activities in groups. According to Coe, Rycroft, and Ernest (1983):

> "We believe that students learn a lot by working together in groups to solve a problem or make a decision. We feel that learners should share their knowledge, compare their opinions, and discuss their ideas in small groups before going on class work or individual work. The instructions for each exercise include suggestions about ways of working with the material" (Cited in Nunan 2003: 91)

Students are given the opportunity to collaborate and work together towards a common goal, i.e. the completion of the task. Cooperation may lead to genuine interactions and meaningful communication. Students are expected to develop interdependence, some social skills, e.g. negotiate, agree, disagree and interrupt politely, and personal skills, e.g. self-discipline, initiative, responsibility, self-esteem, and tolerance. According to Ellis (2003: 269), the key to using group work in task-based pedagogy lies 'in ensuring that students are able to work together effectively'. Wells (1999) outlines the commitments the participants need to make to achieve collaborative interaction:

- To work toward a common understanding satisfactory to all.
- To frame questions and propositions in ways that allow evidence to be brought to bear on them.
- To expand the body of collectively valid propositions.
- To allow any belief to be subjected to criticism if it will advance the discourse.
- To work collaboratively to improve a knowledge artefact. (Wells 1999, reported in Ellis 2003: 269)

(iv) As we privilege a learner-centred approach, students are involved as far as possible and feasible in the process of learning. They are encouraged to make choices and decisions when completing the tasks. Students need to develop a range of skills related not only to language, but also to learning and learning how to learn (Nunan 2003). We aim at training students to

negotiate and plan their work. In other words, we want to help students to reflect upon their learning experience. Skehan (2003) considers that in a learner-centred teaching, both learners and teachers exert different roles:

"The learner is given power not only to interact, but also to control the nature of the interactions which take place. The learner participates in the decision-making process and works with other learners and the teacher to decide what will be done in the class and how it will be done (...) Learners need to know how to be effective learners, since they are being given considerable autonomy and power, while teachers need to be able to accept a very different position with respect to their authority" (262)

Learning how to be an effective learner is not an easy task for our students and requires careful preparation. Besides, teachers might try to renounce to their power in class by supplying useful information and advice to learners without imposition.

We want our teachers to abandon their traditional role of *"dispensers of knowledge"* and to perform different roles. Jacobs (1998) mentions a number of possible roles for the teacher:

"Modelling collaboration, observing and monitoring the students' performance, and intervening when a group is experiencing obvious difficulty. Also a teacher can function as a task participant, sitting with the students to do the task" (Cited in Ellis 2003: 271)

The student is considered as being a partner, and emphasis is more on negotiation rather than consultation (where it is possible). In the suggested lesson, the teacher is expected to fulfil the following roles:

- Facilitator: balancing the amount of exposure and use of language, and ensuring they are both of suitable quality.
- Chairperson: dividing students into groups, ensuring that students keep 'on task' and avoid switching back to the L1.
- Language guide: correcting students' language mistakes when is necessary.
- Course guide: explaining to students the overall objectives of the course and how the components of the task framework can achieve these.
- Guide: providing students with the opportunity to explore for themselves and reach their own conclusions with a minimum of prompting from his part. (Willis 1996: 40).

(v) We intend to engage students in a series of activities to reach specific outcomes through comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the language of instruction (learning through doing).

We believe that the primary focus of a classroom activity is the task and language is the tool used by the students to complete it. We aim from the suggested lesson to create a need to learn and to use language and to develop both students' communicative and learning abilities, i.e. the ability to negotiate, to interpret and to express meaning. Tasks 'empower' students, they take the focus off the teacher, and this may have positive repercussions in terms of students' sense of responsibility for their own learning.

In this study the 'task' is used to refer to the range of activities (by activity, we mean all the actions performed by students) assigned to students in the lesson. So, students may do an information gap activity, solve a problem, give information in spoken or written form, or a jigsaw activity in one lesson, and these activities will constitute a task.

6. A Sample Lesson

6.1. Structure of the Lesson

As far as the structure of the suggested lesson is concerned, it is organised as follows:

a. Unit's Outcomes:

The outcome consists of what learners arrive at when they have completed the task. It refers to the different linguistic concepts, vocabulary and theories that students are expected to be familiar with by the end of each unit. The outcomes should be specified in advance for students, in the pre-task stage.

b. Pre-Task Stage:

It consists in providing students with the necessary background knowledge for the lesson by introducing the topic related vocabulary and defining some topic related concepts. Teachers may also introduce the source of the text, its original purpose, and other relevant information to set the scene for the student. In the suggested lesson, the text is taken from Dinnen (1967), which we found very suitable for our students. In this stage, students will be supplied with the list of outcomes to be reached after the task completion and the kind of processes, skills, and strategies involved during the task completion. Teachers may also use activities to help students learn useful concepts and vocabulary. They are also required to divide the class into small groups of four or five

members, and to ensure that task instructions are clear and understood.

c. Task-Cycle Stage: It is divided into three phases

(i) Task: During this phase the teacher is required to monitor from distance and encourage all attempts at communication, without correcting because this situation has a private feel, and students should be allowed to feel free to experiment. However, teachers can intervene where necessary, and ensure that students clearly understand the assignments, keep on the task (they really talk about the task and nothing else) and use the English language when interacting with each other. They can also help students, when they are solicited, to understand the meaning of some difficult words, or to formulate their utterances. At this stage, teachers are required to avoid any explicit reference to grammatical structure or terminology, which comes at a later stage.

The kind of activities that can be proposed to students are:

- **Reading and Exploiting Texts:** Students are expected to read and comprehend the selected text to be able to answer the different assignments. Students are allowed to use dictionaries and to ask the teacher for clarifications if they encounter a problem in comprehending and processing the text.
- **Information Gap Activities:** These activities involve the transfer of given information from one student to another or from one form to another. One example consists in dividing the class into groups, and each group has a part of the total information and attempts to convey it verbally or in a written form to the others. Or a restoration activity, students replace words that have been omitted from a text and identify in some cases extra words. They are also asked to complete a given piece of text relying on information available in a picture.
- **Jumbled Texts:** Students are presented with parts of a complete text, but in the wrong order, they have to read and decide in which order sentences would be arranged.
- **Jigsaw Activities:** The aim is for students to make a whole from different parts, each part being held by a different group of students and taken from a different source. Students read, and view their section, and report to the others what it contains. They then discuss how all the information fit together. The final product is a new piece containing the synthesised information.

- **Reasoning Gap Activities:** They involve deriving some new information from given information through process of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns.
- **Opinion Gap Activities:** These involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion or choice.
- **Discussions and Decisions:** These require the student to collect and share information (collected from the text) to reach a decision.
- **Analysing pictures:** Students are expected to examine a given picture, analyse it and try to interpret and guess what it represents.
- **Role Play:** Students are expected to assimilate and play the role of the linguist.

(ii) Planning: Once students have performed the different activities orally, they prepare themselves to report to the whole class by writing their answers and this activity requires students to analyse and draw inferences from information presented in the text. In some cases, students are asked to write a summary of the text. It gives students practice in consolidating the main points and identifying and extracting critical information. They discuss what they discovered and make the final decision about what to report to the rest of the class. Since they are asked to present their reports to the whole class, they will naturally want to be accurate and the teacher stands by to give language advice when it is necessary.

(iii) Report: Representatives of some groups will be chosen by the teacher to present their reports to the whole class. Students will hear each other and compare how they all did the task. The teacher comments on the content of the reports.

c. Language Focus Stage: It is an opportunity for explicit language instruction. In this stage students examine and discuss specific features of the text and then the teacher conducts practice of new words, phrases and patterns occurring in the text. The teacher can also select one or two reports and with the help of his students proceed to the correction of the language errors with the help of his students.

6.2. The Lesson: Approaches to Language

a. The text's title: Linguistic Terminology

b. Source: Dinnen, S.J. (1967). An Introduction to General Linguistics, New

York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, INC. pp.17-18

c. The unit's outcomes:

By the end of this unit you are expected to:

- Understand the changes that have occurred in the study of language.
- Understand that linguistics, as a field of study, requires a specialised vocabulary with which linguists work.
- Identify some characteristics of linguistics as a 'science', e.g. objectivity, exhaustiveness, organisation, and clarity ...
- Be familiar with the different ways for approaching language (either a prescriptive approach or a descriptive one)

In this unit you are required to:

- Read the different assignments in groups and decide, with the teacher's assistance, on the organisation of the work, and the contribution of each member of the group.
- Judge the correctness of some expressions.
- Provide synonyms or equivalents for some expressions used in the text.
- Play the role of the linguist.
- Interpret and explain a picture.
- Develop a paragraph that will illustrate the difference (s) between traditional grammar and modern linguistics.
- Write a report that will be presented to the whole class.
- Choose, with the teacher's help, a representative who will present the report to the whole class.
- Listen to others' reports, take notes that you judge important, and compare the different answers.

d. The text:

Linguistic Terminology

Students beginning the study f linguistics often find the terminology they encounter to be formidable and not justified in view of the grammatical terminology they have already learned. However, the new linguistic terminology is used for two main reasons. First, linguistics, like traditional grammar, is largely a way of talking about language, and therefore, a precise vocabulary is required so that specialists in the field can communicate accurately with each other. Second, many of the insights of linguistics result from the fact that linguists assume a point of view different from that of the traditional grammarians. New terms are thus required to distinguish what the linguist and the traditionalist have to say about the same unit.

Still, the language of linguistics is set by linguists, and not all linguists share the same background and interests. While it will be found that their terminology is sometimes divergent, it will also be found that they define terms accurately. Despite the individual differences or interests, as well as different national traditions, all linguists share a basic understanding and agreement as the result of the influential work of scholars like De Saussure, Troubetzkoy, Boas, Sapir, and Chomsky.

One way of pointing out differences between the traditional and the linguistic approaches to language is to say that the scientific view of language is primarily descriptive while a large part of traditional grammatical work, especially as reflected in the usual school grammar, has been prescriptive. It is one of the tasks of school grammars to give rules to distinguish "correct" and "incorrect" speech. On the other hand the linguist, as an initial part of his investigation, merely records what the speakers of a language say, just as he hears it. Successful communication is the sole criterion by which the linguist judges language. This is not at all a necessary conclusion, but merely a division of labour and a recognition of the source of judgements about "correct" and "incorrect" language. Such judgements are always social, there is nothing in the utterances themselves, as sounds we hear, that brands them as right or wrong. The linguist, first, records all there is to hear, as accurately and objectively as he can. It is not his task to lay down rules for usage, although he would obviously be in a favourable position to do this objectively. The difference between the linguist's approach to language and that of the school grammarian is obviously the difference between a scientific and a humanistic goal.

Read the text and answer:

1)- Discuss possible answers for the question what are the reasons behind the new linguistic terminology ? You are provided with some suggestions. Choose the most appropriate one(s):

(a). To establish the similarities between modern linguistics and traditional grammar

(b). To illustrate the autonomy of linguistics as a discipline or field of study.

(c). To facilitate communication and collaboration among linguists.

(d). To illustrate that linguists approach language in a scientific manner.

(e). To set the difference between modern linguistics and other old schools.

(f). To show that languages change over time.

2)- Look at the following statements and say whether they are true or false. When false, try to say why ?

(a). There is an analogy between the task of the traditional grammarians and that of the linguist.

(b). Traditional grammarians were very subjective in their study of language.

(c). Whenever we hold a scientific approach in the study of language, we have to be prescriptive.

(d). Traditional grammarians collected samples of the language they were interested in and attempted to describe the regular structures of the language as it was used.

(e). Modern linguists tell people how they should speak

3)- Match each letter with its corresponding number, in the box below. Look at the example, and note that there are more statements than expected answers.

1. Objectivity	**4. Sole**
2. Brands	**5. Not all linguists share the same background and interests**
3. Accuracy	**6. Divergent**

(a) Linguists belong to different schools

(b) Different

(c) Subjectivity

(d) Clarity

(e) Marks

(f) Exactness

(g) Impartiality

(h) Linguists study language (s) for different purposes

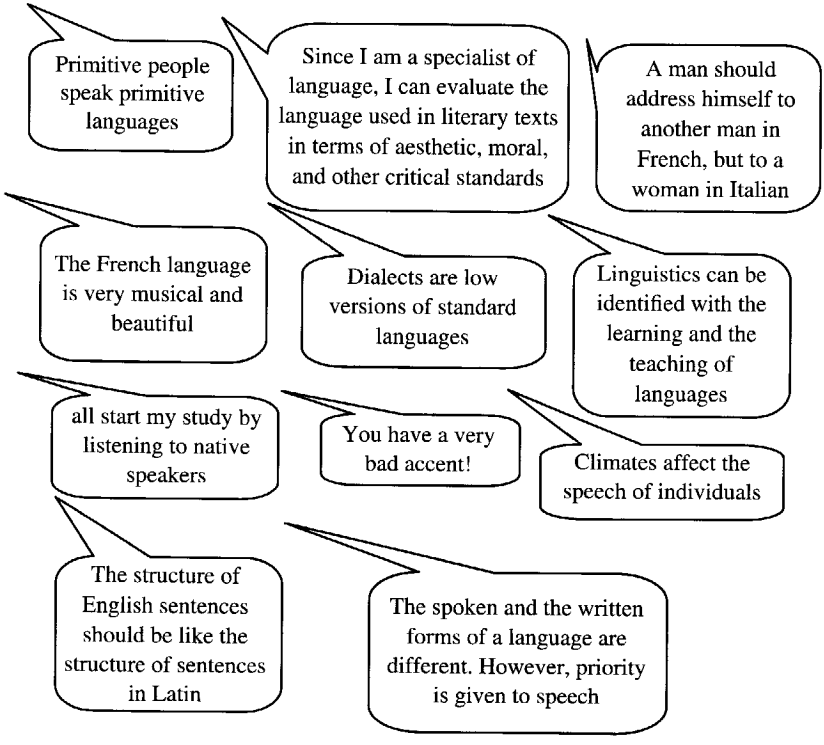
(i) Unique

1 (e.g.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(g)						

4) Look at the picture below and explain what grammatical problem it gives rise to.

"So, then ... would that be 'us the people' or 'we the people'?"

5) Imagine you are a linguist, what expressions from the following statements will you use ? Designate one member from the group to read loudly each statement, and then the others will agree or disagree, i.e., whether the statement is produced by a linguist or a layman.



6) Using your own words, write a paragraph in which you show the differences between linguistics and taditional grammar.

7. Conclusion

The aim from this paper is to implement TBL in the linguistics course and to improve it by suggesting task-based activities. The suggested lesson is expected to move the focus of the learning process from the teacher to the student. It is meant to provide the student a different way of understanding and regarding language as a tool rather than an end in itself or a specific goal.

Enabling First Year students to become self-directed learners involves instruction in content, language, and academic skills. Using approaches like task-based instruction and cooperative learning in a content course may favour the achievement of those goals. It is necessary for linguistics teachers to help their students to become independent and responsible for their own learning. Students deserve to know what Kinsella (1997) calls 'the academic secrets' of each subject area they are studying.

In this paper just one lesson has been presented, but we designed twelve lessons that cover all the topics of the First Year Linguistics Syllabus. The suggested materials have been tested by some linguistics teachers in the English Department, University of Algiers II, providing a positive feedback. They appreciated the proposed activities based on the Task-Based Approach to language teaching, in which their students are at the centre of the learning process. Knowing that for many years, teachers, in the English Department, have always pointed out the inappropriateness and inadequacy of existing textbooks and materials for being either too general or too specialised. In addition, these materials were mainly theoretical and provided very little opportunity for practical work in the tutorial sessions. There were very few exercises to cover some aspects of the programme and none for others.

There was also a positive reaction from the part of the students, who found the suggested materials as being very helpful and valuable. As they are supplied with possible answers to the suggested activities and questions, in addition to some guidance notes on how to proceed and what the expected outcomes are. They described the materials as being self-instructional.

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Appendix

Possible Answers

1. The reasons behind the new linguistic terminology are:

Linguistics as a field of study requires a specialised and precise vocabulary by which linguists will communicate. Modern Linguistics as a scientific study of language is different from Traditional Grammar, and this difference is illustrated by the new terminology used.

2.True or False

a. False. The task of the linguist is different from that of the traditional grammarian. The linguist is a scientist who studies the general properties of grammars, i.e., the universal properties found in all languages, and the specific properties of the grammars of individual languages in order to provide a better understanding of the nature of human language. He aims at describing language objectively, whereas, the traditional grammarian aimed at prescribing and imposing norms or rules of correctness on people.

b. False. Whenever we hold a scientific view of language, our study has to follow a descriptive approach.

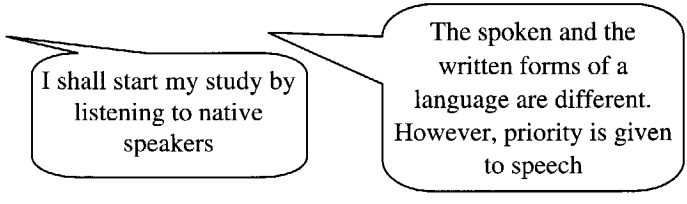
c. False. Traditional grammarians were subjective

d. False. It is the task of the linguist to collect samples of the language he is interested in and to describe the regular structures of the language as it is used.

e. False. Traditional grammarians told people how they should speak.

3.

1	2	3	4	5	6
g	E	f	j	a	b

4. The picture refers to the tendency of traditional g to lay down norms based on personal opinions about the beauty and correctness or otherwise of some part of the language. For most people grammar means 'correct usage', but the cartoon illustrates how non linguistic evaluations are introduced into linguistic discussions. It is obvious that we do not say "us the people" but "we the people".

5. Only these two statements can be said by a linguist: