



Enhancing ESL learners' executive function and cognitive ability: A hybrid approach of situated learning and task-based language teaching

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Abstract

In the contemporary era of globalization, learning a second language has become a pivotal means to broaden individual perspectives and enhance competitiveness. English, as the lingua franca of international communication, assumes particular importance. This paper delves into the integrated application of situated learning (SL) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, aiming to augment learners' executive function (EF) and cognitive ability (CA). SL theory underscores the interplay between learning and context, whereas TBLT emphasizes task-centric pedagogical approaches. These two methodologies share numerous parallels in ESL instruction, both prioritizing the cultivation of students' active participation and communicative competencies. Consequently, the integration of SL with TBLT mutually catalyzes, collectively enhancing students' learning outcomes. In the design and implementation of ESL instruction, a framework comprising stages such as preparation, introduction, task preparation, task implementation, task completion, language feedback, language summary, and task evaluation is proposed to ensure the effectiveness and appeal of teaching. Despite potential challenges in practice, such as insufficient teaching resources, the complexity of instructional implementation, and imperfect assessment and reflection mechanisms, the integrated approach of SL and TBLT still harbors immense potential and value. Thus, further in-depth research and practice are warranted to explore this integrative teaching methodology.

Keywords: situated learning (SL), task-based language teaching (TBLT), ESL, executive function (EF), cognitive ability (CA)

Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization and frequent cross-cultural exchanges, the significance

of English as a Second Language (ESL) education within the entire educational system has been increasingly highlighted (Nero, 2005). In the 21st century, ESL education not only affects students' academic performance but also relates to their competitiveness on the international stage and their ability to engage in cultural exchanges. Therefore, innovating ESL teaching models and improving teaching effectiveness have become focal points of educators' attention.

Traditional English teaching activities often focus on the imparting of grammar and vocabulary, neglecting the practical application of language and understanding of context. Students passively receive knowledge in the classroom, lack practical opportunities, and consequently achieve less-than-satisfactory learning outcomes. However, with the continuous updating of educational concepts and the advancement of technology, an increasing number of educators are paying attention to students' individual differences and learning needs, attempting to innovate ESL teaching models and methods.

Situated learning (SL) is a teaching method that emphasizes learners' language application and practice in real contexts. Its core concept lies in the notion that language is not just an abstract symbolic system but also a tool used in actual communication (Sadler, 2009). Thus, SL emphasizes placing learners in authentic language environments to enhance language skills through imitation, interaction, and participation. For example, in the process of learning English, SL can be achieved through role-playing, simulated dialogues, field inspections, etc., allowing learners to experience the use of English in real language contexts, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the practical application of language.

In contrast to SL, task-based language teaching (TBLT) focuses more on cultivating students' ability to complete specific tasks. Van den Branden (2016) suggests that the ultimate goal of language learning is to be able to use language to accomplish various practical tasks, such as obtaining information, solving problems, and communicating ideas. Therefore, TBLT promotes language learning and communicative competence by setting up real communicative tasks. These tasks can be practical problems in daily life or simulated professional scenarios. In the process of task completion, students not only need to use language for communication but also need to mobilize various cognitive resources for strategic thinking and planning.

In reality, SL and TBLT are not mutually exclusive but complementary and mutually reinforcing. SL provides TBLT with authentic language environments, enabling students to use language more naturally when completing tasks. Conversely, TBLT makes SL more targeted and practical through specific tasks. The combination of the two can not only improve students' language skills but also cultivate their language thinking abilities and communication strategy awareness.

Furthermore, both SL and TBLT emphasize students' subjectivity and participation (Fuller et al., 2005; Hadi, 2013). In traditional language teaching, students often passively receive knowledge, whereas in SL and TBLT, students need to actively participate in language practices, improve their language abilities through imitation, interaction, task completion, etc. This active learning approach not only stimulates students' interest and motivation in learning but also cultivates their autonomous learning abilities and habits of lifelong learning.

This paper aims to explore an integrated approach of SL and TBLT to enhance ESL learners' executive function (EF) and cognitive ability (CA). Firstly, starting from an integrated theoretical framework, the commonalities and complementarities of SL and TBLT will be analyzed to provide a theoretical basis for the design of integrated methods. Secondly, specific steps in classroom design and implementation will be introduced, including preparation, introduction, task preparation, task implementation, task completion, language feedback, language summary, and task evaluation, to assist teachers in flexibly applying integrated methods in actual

teaching. Finally, the advantages and challenges of the integrated approach will be discussed, and future development directions will be proposed, aiming to provide reference and guidance for teaching reform and teaching practice in the field of ESL education.

Theoretical Foundations

SL Theory

Auer and Tsiatsos (2019) define SL as a theory explaining how individuals acquire specialized skills, including research on apprenticeship periods to understand how legitimate peripheral participation leads to becoming members of practice communities. It emphasizes that learning is a holistic cognitive process that occurs in specific contexts, involving the interaction of tools, situations, and interpersonal communication, advocating that effective education should integrate authentic practice contexts, enabling students to engage in complex tasks and gain practical experience. Learning is viewed as a process or function within social practices, where engagement in authentic social interactions is crucial. SL also relies on the philosophical concept of Situated Rationality by Habermas (1994), emphasizing that rationality is embedded in specific contexts and changes with context. Learning and knowledge acquisition should be highly contextualized, emphasizing elements neglected in the pursuit of rational behavior studies.

SL shares many similarities with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development (Hedegaard, 1998). Vygotsky believed that human activities occur within multi-layered, interconnected cultural backgrounds, sharing beliefs, values, knowledge, etc. (Eun, 2010). These activities rely on tools and applications provided by culture, constituting the context of learning activities. SL also emphasizes learning occurring in specific cultural and social contexts, involving interpersonal interactions and tool usage.

Based on social constructivism, McKinley (2015) asserts that the human developmental process has social components, and knowledge formation occurs through interaction with others. SL advocates that effective education should integrate authentic practice contexts, where students engage in complex tasks to gain practical experience. This aligns with the constructivist theoretical framework, emphasizing learners' active ability to construct learning environments tailored to their unique knowledge needs.

SL emphasizes that learning is part of everyday practice, occurring in social environments such as workplaces and homes. Shifting from "objective" knowledge divorced from context to knowledge implementation in practice and action is crucial. Learners adopt attitudes of understanding others, engage in dialogue and communication, expanding their knowledge of personal local space-time. This contrasts with traditional teaching methods that overlook the influence of time and place on rational behavior (Handley et al., 2006; Unsal & Kasap, 2021).

Situated cognitive approaches emphasize elements often overlooked in the pursuit of rational behavior research, such as time, place, etc. These elements have significant implications for understanding rational behavior in the real world. Situated cognitive approaches highlight the close association of cognition with specific contexts, where cognitive activities occur to achieve specific behavioral goals rather than abstract thinking divorced from actual actions. This contrasts with completely rational approaches that attempt to ignore time and place, pursuing universal rational principles (Habermas, 1994).

TBLT Theory

TBLT holds a paramount position in language education, with its core principle centered around completing meaningful tasks using authentic language. The teaching concept originat-

ed from Prabhu (1987), extensively elaborated in his work "Second Language Pedagogy." Prabhu viewed tasks as activities where students reach conclusions in the thought process, enabling them to self-regulate their thinking. He emphasized the unconscious nature of language acquisition and advocated that the optimal language learning method should focus on language meaning, speaking ability, and practical operation, as tasks aid in discovering and utilizing natural language learning mechanisms. Prabhu categorized teaching activities into four types, with meaning-centered activities being the most advocated, as he believed that through focusing on language meaning, students could internalize the grammar system.

Furthermore, the teaching concept of TBLT shares many similarities with Krashen's (1992) advocated Natural Approach. Based on the Input Hypothesis and Natural Approach, it advocates mimicking the natural process through which children learn their mother tongue to promote ESL acquisition. Candlin (1987) redefined tasks, considering them a series of hierarchical and discriminative activities containing problems, especially communicative problems. These activities aim to prompt students and teachers to find solutions to problems and apply new and old knowledge in practical contexts to explore and achieve teaching goals. Tasks are seen as the core units of curriculum design, termed "process syllabi." This concept originated from an evaluation of integrated syllabi, believing that students learn and master language better through purposeful communicative activities. Unlike Prabhu's view, curriculum designers need to possess highly effective teaching skills, and students also need to actively participate in the learning process (Breen & Candlin, 1980).

Nunan (1989) emphasized integrating specific tasks into the teaching process to make students' language use closer to real life. In subsequent research, Nunan (1992) defined tasks as any classroom activity that requires learners to focus on language meaning rather than form, and these activities can exist as independent communicative acts. He criticized traditional language teaching methods that segment language into individual parts for sequential teaching, believing that this approach is not conducive to students solving problems in the real world. Nunan emphasizes the communicativeness and meaning-oriented nature of tasks, advocating for using the inductive method to learn language, guiding students to summarize language features through observation rather than directly imparting rules and examples. When students form erroneous language rules, teachers should promptly provide assistance and correction. Therefore, students should learn grammar rules through contexts or tasks with practical significance and utility. Nunan's teaching philosophy emphasizes the practicality of tasks and their close connection with real communication, aiding students in better mastering language skills.

The Interrelation between SL and TBLT

SL and TBLT play significant roles in the field of language learning. Despite their distinct definitions, they exhibit a close correlation in actual teaching practice. SL often relies on specific tasks to construct contexts, allowing students to experience and perceive language during task execution. Correspondingly, TBLT also depends on contextual support, enabling students to engage in language communication and application in real or simulated contexts. Thus, contexts and tasks mutually depend on and promote each other, collectively advancing the language learning process.

SL and TBLT also share similarities in their characteristics. Both emphasize student centrality, emphasizing active participation and experiences in contexts, aligning with student-centered teaching philosophies (Yeoman & Wilson, 2019; Liu & Ren, 2021). Moreover, both teaching methods prioritize the practical use of language and the cultivation of communicative competence, allowing students to enhance their language proficiency through language

communication and practice in authentic contexts.

In practical application, SL and TBLT also share many commonalities. In ESL contexts, teachers can create various real or simulated contexts based on students' interests and actual situations, such as role-playing, simulated dialogues, and scenario enactments. Students engage in various tasks within these contexts, such as shopping, asking for directions, ordering food, etc., which not only stimulate their interest in learning but also enhance their language proficiency and foster their cross-cultural communication skills (Lave, 2016).

Regarding assessment methods, both approaches emphasize process-oriented assessment, focusing on students' performance and progress during the learning process rather than solely on outcomes. This assessment method encourages students to pay more attention to their learning process, promptly identify deficiencies and issues, and adjust their learning strategies, thereby enhancing learning effectiveness.

Application of SL in ESL Teaching

Design and Implementation of SL in ESL Teaching

(1) Situational Introduction

Situational introduction integrates specific contexts with teaching content, effectively immersing students in relevant learning scenarios to provide them with a preliminary understanding of the content. This approach not only helps stimulate students' interest in learning but also deepens their understanding of knowledge, thereby enhancing learning effectiveness.

To significantly improve teaching quality and effectively capture students' attention, using video materials or storytelling is an excellent strategy (Ryokai et al., 2003). Through videos or stories, the actual scenes related to the teaching theme can vividly demonstrate, allowing students to immerse themselves in real contexts and gain an intuitive perspective on understanding the lesson content. This contextualized introduction not only effectively captures students' attention but also stimulates their curiosity, encouraging them to participate more actively in classroom activities.

Situational introduction helps students recognize the close connection between English and real life. For example, by watching videos related to shopping, students can profoundly understand the practical value of English in real-life situations, thereby enhancing their learning motivation. At the same time, this introduction method also helps cultivate students' awareness of applying knowledge, enabling them to better integrate what they have learned into real life.

When implementing situational introduction, teachers need to ensure that the selected contexts are closely related to the teaching content so that students can understand the knowledge more easily and improve learning effectiveness. In addition, teachers should pay attention to the timing and manner of situational introduction to avoid overly abrupt or lengthy introductions that may distract students' attention and affect teaching effectiveness (Bereiter, 2021). Therefore, teachers should make sufficient preparations before class, carefully design the introduction segment, and ensure its natural and smooth connection with the subsequent teaching content.

(2) Situational Communication

Clyne and Sharifian (2008) believe that the core value of English as a language lies in expression and communication. However, for ESL learners, the lack of a real communication environment becomes a key factor restricting their oral communication abilities. Although they may grasp grammar, phrases, and basic sentence patterns, they often struggle to apply this

knowledge effectively in real-life situations, lacking genuine expression and communication awareness, which undoubtedly affects learning efficiency.

Therefore, in English teaching, teachers need to cleverly create relevant contexts to provide students with immersive communication environments, establish solid communication platforms, and stimulate their interest in learning English. During the review process, organizing students to retell the text content and triggering their interest and curiosity by narrating a story about the teaching theme. To help students better understand ESL expressions, storytelling can be combined with pictures or slides to present the scenes of the story (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2008).

Subsequently, teachers can design a series of question scenarios to guide students in deep communication, thereby achieving the purpose of consolidating knowledge. During teaching, teachers should actively express their opinions to set an example for students and stimulate their desire to communicate. At the same time, this also helps bridge the gap between teachers and students and improve students' expressive abilities. Through this method, students can not only boldly express their ideas in a real context but also gradually improve their ESL oral communication skills, achieving comprehensive progress in ESL learning.

(3) Situational Application

Application covers both oral and written aspects, and its cornerstone lies in students' language organization ability and the use of grammar and sentence patterns (Romova & Andrew, 2011). Therefore, facing academic pressure, students' written application and expression abilities can be honed by constructing different contexts, thereby steadily improving their ESL writing skills. Specifically, when organizing students to write, to enhance their language application abilities, before teaching writing skills, students can be guided to brainstorm and then describe the topic in their native language. Subsequently, multimedia tools can be used to show students an online sample essay, immersing them in this scenario and encouraging them to write independently.

Advantages and Challenges of SL in ESL Teaching

Situated or contextual learning provides the social environment for English communication and serves as the venue for language interaction activities. Situational teaching method encourages active student participation and mutual learning through knowledge as the carrier. Particularly, Chinese students, due to the lack of language environment and outdated teaching methods, need improvement in their ESL learning interest and proficiency (Liu, 2013). A good language environment can enhance language intuition and improve reading, listening, speaking, and writing abilities. Situational teaching requires students to fully perceive the learning objects and utilize multiple senses, and teachers need to build a bridge between students and the English language by creating a language environment. In the realm of language acquisition, as posited by Dörnyei (1998) and further explored by Kasap (2020), the journey of language learning unfolds as a dynamic interplay between internal elements, represented by learners themselves, and external influences emanating from the learning environment. Central to this process is the pivotal role of interest, serving as the intrinsic impetus propelling learning forward. Consequently, educators are tasked with the responsibility of integrating facets of English-speaking cultures, traditions, and societal norms into the curriculum to ignite and sustain students' enthusiasm. Undoubtedly, second language acquisition (SL) brings forth manifold advantages, enriching individuals' linguistic repertoires and cultural competencies.

SL has advantages in ESL teaching, but it also faces challenges, such as resource require-

ments, learner differences, language proficiency limitations, assessment difficulties, curriculum integration, and time management. The primary challenge is resource requirements, which entail enriching real contexts and related resources to support teaching activities, posing a daunting task for teachers (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Additionally, teachers need to meticulously design teaching situations to meet the diverse needs of students. SL requires interdisciplinary integration and entails more time and effort investment.

Improving Student EF and CAs through SL in ESL Teaching

It is essential to clarify that the core objective of ESL classrooms is to cultivate students' practical language application skills (Mangubhai et al., 2004). SL, based on real-life scenarios and specific tasks, allows students to learn and practice in these practical language environments. This learning method not only helps students better understand and remember new knowledge but, more importantly, provides them with the opportunity to exercise their language skills in real-world applications, thereby truly enhancing their language proficiency. Moreover, when faced with problems and challenges in real-life situations, students need to apply their own intelligence and strategies to solve them, undoubtedly greatly improving their EF and CA.

Davison (2006) argues that ESL classrooms emphasize student interaction and cooperation, believing that this is not only conducive to language learning but also an important means of cultivating students' social communication skills. SL encourages students to complete tasks and solve problems through interaction and cooperation with teachers and peers. Through communication, sharing, and collaboration with teachers and peers, students can not only improve their language skills but also cultivate their teamwork spirit and problem-solving abilities. This enhancement of comprehensive abilities undoubtedly further promotes the development of students' EF and CA.

Borg and Burns (2008) suggest that task-driven learning is often used in ESL classrooms, allowing students to learn and master knowledge through the process of completing tasks. SL is also task-oriented, allowing students to exercise their language skills and problem-solving abilities through a series of challenging tasks. This learning method not only enhances students' motivation and self-efficacy but also teaches them how to effectively solve problems and execute tasks in practice, thereby further enhancing their EF and CA.

Best et al. (2015) argue that ESL classrooms emphasize student reflection and feedback, considering it an important part of improving learning outcomes. SL also emphasizes this aspect, requiring students to reflect on their experiences and lessons learned after completing tasks, while also accepting feedback from teachers and peers to better improve their learning. This mechanism of reflection and feedback helps students identify and correct their problems in a timely manner, thereby continuously improving their EF and CA, and driving their learning progress.

Application of TBLT in ESL Teaching

Design and Implementation of TBLT in ESL Teaching

(1) Task Design

Lutiali and Bwire (2015) elucidate that in TBLT, it is necessary to design task-based teaching activities around specific communicative goals and language items to create practical and operational tasks. These activities aim to enable students to achieve language learning and proficiency through various language tasks.

When designing tasks, it is essential to ensure that the difficulty level is moderate to accom-

moderate the abilities of the majority of students in the class. Additionally, task design should be aligned with the curriculum and students' ESL proficiency, maximizing the integration of textbook knowledge points. When presenting tasks, efforts should be made to help students review and reinforce their learning, assisting them in establishing the intrinsic connections of language knowledge and forming a systematic language knowledge framework.

Moreover, task design should also focus on integrating students' life experiences and needs, creating authentic situations. This provides students with more opportunities for creative ESL application, enabling them to practically use language during task completion, thereby enhancing their language communicative abilities.

(2) Task Implementation

In the classroom environment of ESL teaching, implementing micro-tasks or task chains constitutes an efficient teaching method. This method emphasizes student-centeredness, advocating the close integration of practical operation and language use, effectively promoting students' ESL abilities and oral expression skills.

During the implementation of micro-tasks or task chains, students can either act independently or choose to work collaboratively in groups. This teaching model not only motivates students to actively participate and stimulates creativity but also helps cultivate teamwork. Teachers need to design tasks in advance and require students to complete them within a specified time frame to cultivate students' time management and self-management skills.

Teachers provide ample space for students to express themselves freely in ESL. At this stage, the teacher's role is more of a facilitator and observer rather than excessively intervening in student discussions. By observing students' communication processes, teachers can understand students' thinking patterns and language expression abilities, providing valuable insights for future teaching (Bruton, 2005).

After completing the oral preparation tasks, students need to present their tasks in the classroom. This provides students with a stage to showcase their oral abilities and is also a crucial moment for teachers to assess task completion. Through task presentations, teachers can evaluate students' oral expression, clarity of thought, persuasive power, etc., providing them with more targeted guidance.

Throughout the entire process, students gradually transition from passive to active, achieving a shift from learning to self-directed learning. This transformation helps stimulate students' enthusiasm, cultivate their teamwork spirit, and enhance their self-directed learning abilities. By completing tasks, students can experience the joy of success, enhance their confidence, and thus develop a greater passion for ESL learning.

(3) Communication and Summary after Task Implementation

In the assessment stage of ESL teaching, the teacher's role is irreplaceable. Assessment not only detects students' learning outcomes but also provides feedback and guidance on their learning process. Therefore, selecting and applying assessment methods is crucial.

While the traditional teacher-summarizing evaluation model provides a reasonable overall understanding of student learning conditions, it often overlooks individual differences among students and dynamic changes in the learning process, potentially leading to one-sided and subjective evaluation results.

To more comprehensively and accurately reflect students' learning situations and stimulate their initiative and participation, a multi-level, multi-channel, and multi-mode assessment model is needed (Siliang et al., 2024). This new model should include not only teacher evaluation but also student self-assessment, peer assessment, and group assessment. In the peer

assessment stage, teachers can guide students to raise questions and express different viewpoints based on the presentation content, and then engage in discussions or debates. This not only evaluates students' adaptability and improvisational oral proficiency but also cultivates their critical thinking and cooperative spirit. At the same time, the peer assessment process helps students deepen their understanding of learning content, identify their own deficiencies, and identify areas for improvement.

Additionally, teachers should create a positive English-speaking atmosphere during the assessment process, providing students with more opportunities to express themselves. Nguyen (2013) suggests that by organizing activities such as ESL speeches and ESL debates, students can confidently express their thoughts and enhance their ESL oral abilities. The summary evaluation stage after task completion is equally important. Teachers should provide detailed comments on students' task completion, helping them recognize their strengths and weaknesses and providing suggestions and directions for their next steps in learning.

Advantages and Challenges of TBLT in ESL Teaching

Traditional teaching methods center around the teacher, with students passively receiving knowledge and waiting for the teacher to impart knowledge and solve problems. In contrast, task-based teaching focuses on the student, encouraging them to think and collaborate to solve problems, thereby enhancing language skills. In task-based teaching, the teacher becomes a facilitator and facilitator for students, while students become the main body of the classroom and task performers (Vieira, 2017). Evaluation also shifts from traditional summative assessment to formative assessment, focusing on students' language application ability and personality development during task completion. Task-based teaching emphasizes a balance between language input and output, allowing students to naturally use language during task completion and enhance their understanding through feedback. This approach effectively increases students' interest and confidence in learning ESL, making them more focused on language learning itself.

In the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) model, teachers use summative assessment, focusing only on outcomes (Butler, 2011). In contrast, task-based teaching primarily employs formative assessment, focusing on students' comprehensive language application abilities and personality development. Students work individually or cooperatively to complete tasks, emphasizing the application of their language skills, thereby diminishing teacher subjective assessment. Sanchez (2004) suggests that task-based teaching places higher demands on teachers, requiring a broad knowledge base and stronger classroom management skills. However, the quality of task design directly impacts teaching effectiveness, making task setting and difficulty control challenging.

Improving Students' EF and CA through TBLT in ESL

Cognitive psychology emphasizes that learning is an active, constructive process, where students acquire and organize knowledge through actual participation and practice (Chi & Wylie, 2014). TBLT aligns with this viewpoint by providing rich task contexts, prompting students to apply existing language knowledge to solve problems within tasks. This practical learning deepens students' understanding and mastery of language knowledge, thereby enhancing their EF and CA.

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the interaction between cognition, environment, and behavior (Schunk & Usher, 2012). In TBLT, students typically work collaboratively in groups to complete tasks, solving problems together through communication and cooperation with peers. In this process, students not only learn others' thinking styles and problem-solving

strategies but also improve their EF and CA by observing and imitating others' behaviors. Additionally, TBLT emphasizes the importance of learning contexts, placing language learning in real-life situations, making it easier for students to understand and apply language knowledge, thus enhancing their EF and CA.

Integration of SL and TBLT

Integrated Theoretical Framework

In second language acquisition, integrating SL and TBLT theories is feasible because they share commonalities and contribute to enhancing learners' ESL learning outcomes.

Phenomenology emphasizes acquiring knowledge through direct experience and observation of phenomena (Willig, 2007). Both SL and TBLT focus on practice and application in authentic language environments, acquiring language skills through imitation, interaction, and participation. They both assist students in better language application and proficiency. Pragmatism posits that knowledge is gained through experiential activities and behaviors in practice (Taatila & Raij, 2012). Both learning theories emphasize students' active participation and real-world experiences, stimulating students' interest and motivation for learning, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. Additionally, social constructivism holds that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and communication (Carless, 2020). Both approaches emphasize cultivating students' language communication abilities through authentic language interaction or various tasks to enhance students' communicative skills. Furthermore, both emphasize designing teaching content and activities based on students' individuality and learning objectives, facilitating personalized learning and achievement of learning goals. Therefore, SL and TBLT share commonalities in second language acquisition, and integrating these two learning theories is feasible, as they can complement each other and enhance language learning outcomes.

ESL Classroom Design and Implementation Steps

Step 1: Preparation Stage

During the initial phase, teachers need to carefully consider and prepare to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of teaching activities. Firstly, teachers should comprehensively understand students' backgrounds and learning needs, including language proficiency, cultural background, learning habits, and goals. By analyzing student needs, teachers can adjust ESL teaching content and methods more accurately to better suit students' actual needs. Secondly, teachers should delve into the theoretical frameworks and teaching principles of SL and TBLT, grasping their commonalities and differences, and exploring how to effectively integrate them. This requires teachers to have solid knowledge of ESL education theory and rich teaching experience. Additionally, teachers should meticulously plan the curriculum structure and teaching activities to ensure that the situational settings and task designs closely align with teaching objectives while stimulating students' learning interest. Teachers also need to closely collaborate with teaching team members to discuss teaching plans and prepare resources, clarifying responsibilities and task division. Finally, teachers should establish effective assessment and reflection mechanisms, promptly collect student feedback and teaching data, continuously adjust and optimize teaching practices to improve teaching quality and effectiveness.

Step 2: Introduction

During the introduction stage, the teacher's responsibility is to guide students into a learning

state and create a conducive learning framework and atmosphere. To achieve this goal, teachers can use engaging topics or questions to attract students and stimulate their interest. The chosen topics should be closely related to students' daily lives to evoke emotional resonance. Additionally, simulating real-life situations or presenting relevant materials allows students to experience ESL application in practical environments. When explaining tasks or learning objectives, teachers should clearly outline the tasks students need to complete and the expected outcomes to motivate students' learning and expectations. Moreover, through diversified language activation activities such as oral practice, vocabulary games, or listening exercises, teachers help students review and reinforce language knowledge and skills. It is important to interact actively with students, establishing close connections and trust between teachers and students, creating a positive, cooperative learning atmosphere, and promoting students' active participation and teamwork.

Step 3: Task Preparation

When preparing tasks, the teacher's core responsibility is to design and prepare diverse language tasks to effectively promote students' language learning and communicative skills. Firstly, clarify the learning objectives of the task, ensuring alignment with the curriculum and student needs to guarantee the effectiveness and feasibility of the task. Depending on the teaching content and student level, select appropriate types of tasks such as information exchange, problem-solving, role-playing, etc., to stimulate students' learning interest and enthusiasm. When designing task content, specific activities such as dialogues, scenario rehearsals, discussions, games, etc., should be devised to allow students to apply language knowledge and skills in practice. Additionally, prepare relevant teaching materials and resources to ensure students can successfully complete tasks and obtain necessary information and language input. When guiding tasks, teachers should clearly explain requirements, steps, and standards to help students accurately understand and complete tasks. Finally, flexibly arrange task implementation methods and time to ensure students have sufficient resources and time to complete tasks. Teachers can choose individual, group, or whole-class cooperative tasks based on actual situations to enhance learning effectiveness and participation.

Step 4: Task Implementation

During the implementation stage, the teacher acts as a guide, organizing and guiding students to complete ESL tasks to enhance their language learning and communicative abilities. Teachers should provide learning guidance and support, explain vocabulary and grammar, provide language models and examples, and guide students in organizing language and thoughts effectively. At the same time, encourage student cooperation and interaction, promote ESL communication and collaborative problem-solving, and stimulate learning enthusiasm through forms such as group discussions and role-playing. Teachers can also assist in simulating real-life situations or providing relevant materials to create suitable language environments to help students understand and apply language knowledge and skills. Through task implementation, students continuously engage in language output, enhancing language application abilities and communicative skills. Teachers act as guides, providing timely feedback and guidance to help students solve problems and difficulties, and adjust learning strategies and methods.

Step 5: Task Completion

During the task completion stage, teachers need to observe students' performance in tasks and encourage reflection to comprehensively assess students' language learning and commu-

nication abilities. Firstly, teachers should observe students' ESL usage in tasks, such as fluency, accuracy, and adaptability, and record to understand students' learning issues and needs. Secondly, teachers should encourage students to reflect on and share their experiences in completing tasks, through forms such as group discussions, writing, and oral expression, allowing students to share gains, challenges, and growth, and evaluate their language abilities and formulate improvement plans.

Step 6: Language Feedback

The feedback stage includes both teacher feedback and peer feedback. Teacher feedback not only means providing students with specific guidance on ESL usage but also includes positive encouragement and constructive guidance. Teachers should detail students' strengths in tasks, such as fluent expression or correct grammar usage, and provide specific improvement suggestions for students' potential problems, such as pronunciation errors or inappropriate vocabulary choices, to help students continuously improve their language proficiency. Meanwhile, through mutual communication, discussion, and interaction among students, they can share observations and experiences, identify each other's strengths, and offer improvement suggestions, thereby promoting cooperation and mutual progress. This two-way feedback mechanism not only helps students identify their shortcomings but also provides opportunities for improvement, enhancing students' confidence and learning motivation. Therefore, this language feedback stage not only assesses students' language learning progress but also provides opportunities for their growth and development, promoting comprehensive improvement in their language learning and communication abilities.

Step 7: Language Summary

This step is not only a review of the learning process but also a summary and consolidation of the learned language knowledge. By reviewing the language structures, vocabulary, and expressions involved in tasks, students can understand and apply these language points in practical contexts, deepening their impressions and understanding of them. Teachers can guide students in discussions and sharing, summarizing key language knowledge and identifying learning focuses and difficulties together.

Step 8: Task Evaluation

Task evaluation involves comprehensive assessment of students' language application abilities during task completion, including grammar accuracy, vocabulary usage, language fluency, and situational adaptability. Through the analysis and comparison of students' language expressions, teachers can accurately evaluate students' ESL levels and learning progress, providing references and guidance for subsequent teaching. Secondly, task feedback provides timely feedback on the evaluation results, aiming to affirm students' strengths and provide improvement suggestions. For excellent performers, teachers should give positive affirmation and encouragement to motivate them to continue their efforts; for students with deficiencies, targeted guidance and suggestions should be provided to help them identify and correct errors, improving their language proficiency.

Step 9: End of Class

Teachers will summarize and conclude the tasks and language learning of the class. This includes emphasizing the learning focus and key points, reviewing the key ESL knowledge and skills learned by students in the class to ensure students have a clear understanding and mastery of the class content. Through summarizing and concluding, students can better under-

stand the class objectives and content, and have a clearer understanding of their learning achievements. Next, teachers will look forward to the tasks and learning content of the next class. Teachers can briefly introduce the theme and objectives of the next class, stimulating students' interest and expectations for learning. Through looking forward to the next class, students can understand the upcoming content in advance, helping them prepare for learning and maintain enthusiasm and initiative in learning.

Advantages and Challenges of Integration

Integrating SL with TBLT can create a comprehensive teaching approach. This method emphasizes both the application of language in authentic contexts and the development of students' ability to complete specific tasks. It also emphasizes the cultivation of students' language output and communicative abilities, allowing them to apply language knowledge and engage in practical communication in authentic contexts, thereby enhancing language expression and communicative skills. Additionally, it allows for flexible adjustments based on students' individuality and learning goals. Teachers can dynamically adjust teaching content and activities based on student feedback and performance to meet their needs and achieve personalized learning goals. SL and TBLT both emphasize students' active participation and experience, which can stimulate learning interest and motivation, enabling students to actively participate in language learning in authentic contexts and improve learning effectiveness. However, there are also some drawbacks, such as a lack of teaching resources and activities, the complexity of teaching implementation, and mismatches in current assessment and reflection mechanisms. Therefore, further optimization of this method is needed.

Outlook

In the future, modern technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can be fully utilized to create richer and more realistic contexts for SL and TBLT. In these virtual environments, students can experience language application scenarios firsthand, thereby mastering language skills more effectively. Additionally, with the help of online resources and teaching platforms, teachers can provide personalized learning support to students and flexibly adjust teaching content and activities.

To address the current mismatch in assessment and reflection mechanisms, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research and establish a more suitable assessment system for integrating SL and TBLT. This includes developing more diverse assessment tools and methods, such as language task evaluation forms and self-assessment tools for language expression, to comprehensively and objectively assess students' language learning and communicative abilities. At the same time, establishing effective reflection mechanisms encourages students to reflect deeply on the learning process and self-evaluate, promoting their autonomous learning and continuous improvement.

The exploration of integrated methods of SL and TBLT involves multiple disciplines, including language education, psychology, educational technology, and so forth. Therefore, strengthening interdisciplinary cooperation and research is crucial. Through interdisciplinary research, we can better understand learners' cognitive characteristics and learning needs, optimize teaching design and implementation processes, and improve teaching effectiveness and learning experiences.

Teachers are the key forces in teaching, and their professional development and training are crucial. In the future, efforts should be made to strengthen teachers' professional development and training by providing targeted teaching training courses and resources to help them master the latest teaching theories and methods and enhance their teaching abilities and levels.

Additionally, establishing teacher exchange platforms and professional communities promotes the sharing of experiences and cooperation among teachers, jointly promoting the development and practice of integrated methods.

In conclusion, the integration of SL and TBLT has tremendous potential and broad prospects. Through continuous innovation and improvement, it can better promote the development of students' language learning and communicative abilities. This requires joint efforts from the education sector, scholars, and teachers to advance the progress of this integrated method and make greater contributions to the field of language education.

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