

Effectiveness of Using Task-based Teaching Method in Improving English Writing Skills of Undergraduates

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A most commonly seen hurdle faced by Sri Lankan undergraduates today is their incompetence in English communication. Even though there are many underlining causes that contribute to this major issue, out-dated teaching methods play a vital role as they demotivate the students and diminish their enthusiasm in learning English. According to a number of research studies done by scholars all over the globe, Task-based teaching method has been successful in supporting L2 learners to learn English effectively, contrary to what is achieved through traditional teaching methods. For the present study the researcher has chosen English writing skills; one aspect of English communication, as she identified visible errors done by the undergraduates in examination papers and in their routine classroom activities. The main objective of this study was to find out the effectiveness of the task-based teaching method in improving English writing skills of undergraduates by minimizing their L1 interference. As for the study sample, 46 second year undergraduates (2014/2015) who were following the degree, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka were selected. The researcher chose this particular sample because they should be able to equip with English and to communicate effectively using English related to their career path, yet this requirement was not sufficiently portrayed when their examination papers and classroom activities were closely analyzed. As for the methodology of the study, the researcher has used a pre-test and a post-test by subjecting the students to write movie reviews of two different movies which were screened for them before the pre-test and the post-test. These tests were marked following a standard criterion which carried 50 marks for areas grammaticality, relevance, vocabulary, organization and coherence by allotting 10 marks for each aspect. These tests were given to compare their improvement; through an analysis of the marks they scored, after applying task-based teaching method for three months. The reviews written for the pre-test displayed various errors made by the subjects due to their L1 interference such as incorrect use, redundancy and absence of articles, incorrect use of prepositions, semiotic errors due to direct translations from L1 to English, inability to comprehend nuances in English, errors of duplication, errors in pluralization, errors due to wrong word order, errors in subject-verb agreement, omission of “Be” verbs, incorrect usage of the forms of “have” etc. After the application of task-based teaching method for three months, the post-test explicitly substantiated that many of these errors had been reduced, and thus their English writing had been conspicuously improved.

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