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Implementing Task-based Learning (TBL) for Learning German in Indonesia

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Abstract

An effective approach is needed to implement life-based learning and improve students' capability in mastering and using German language. A task-based approach is one such method that supports learning that prioritizes life-based learning. Gradually arranged assignments and exercises are expected to help develop the learner's German language competence. Appropriate tasks and exercises should be selected so that learning objectives could be achieved optimally. Therefore, this research is expected to optimize the quality of learning through a task-based learning approach in accordance with modern learning guidelines that prioritize the improvement of German language teachers' capabilities in Indonesia. The current study used a qualitative research design to see the effectiveness of the task-based learning approach with the *Rückwärtsplanung* planning model for learning German in Indonesia. Data were taken from 30 German-language teachers from all over Indonesia who took part in the e-workshop task-based learning with the researchers themselves and other collaborators. The data used is a lesson-plan document prepared by the teachers to study the outcomes of lesson plans that were created with a task-based learning approach. The results of the study showed that most of the lesson plans prepared by the teachers had not yet fully adapted the task-based learning approach of the *Rückwärtsplanung* planning model. Teachers had difficulty determining the right exercises for the assigned task, so the exercises do not support the achievement of learning goals.

Keywords: life-based learning, task-based learning, *Rückwärtsplanung*

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1. Introduction

To improve the competence and professionalism of German language teachers in Indonesia, as well as the quality its educators, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has conducted several training programs organized by various institutions, including the Center of Development and Empowerment of Teachers and Language Education Personnel (PPPTK-Bahasa) Jakarta. Training activities organized

by both government agencies and universities are designed to prepare teachers to be able to plan and teach professionally according to the demands of teachers in the 21st century. However, it is found that teachers of German language in particular still have difficulty designing and planning their learning, because they tend to focus on the "what" to teach. Besides, the planning that is made sometimes cannot accommodate the needs of the students to develop their competency to use German in real life.

The German language competence of students is formulated in the German lesson syllabus of Curriculum 2013 by accommodating a life-based learning approach. Life-based learning leads students to be able to use German in real life (Funk et al., 2004). Assignments and exercises that are arranged gradually help develop students' competency in German. For this reason, it is necessary to choose assignments and exercises so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally. The selection of exercises and tasks that are effective in learning requires mastery of methodical didactic principles and modern language learning models. The methodical didactic principles that are used to select and organize assignments and exercises should be designed and arranged to form a successful learning.

Based on preliminary observations through Lesson Plans (RPP) by German language teachers during the training organized by PPPTK Bahasa Jakarta in the last two years, it was found that the exercises selected and presented were not based on the life-oriented tasks. This causes students to have difficulty completing tasks that are oriented towards the use of German in real life. To implement life-based learning, it is necessary to choose the right learning strategy. Task-based learning is one of methods that can be used to solve these problems. The use of this strategy places students in situations like in the real life, a situation where oral communication is essential for performing a specific task. Task-based learning has the advantage of giving students the opportunity to use their mastery of German according to their level.

Based on this background, research on task-based learning in German in accordance with the 21st century learning that prioritizes capabilities and needs in real life will be carried out in collaboration with PPPTK Bahasa to get RPP data that have been developed by teachers in Indonesia. The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of task-based learning in German lessons through the planning model of *Rückwärtsplanung*. *Rückwärtsplanung* means backward planning. The principle of this planning model is, we plan a lesson in which we consistently start from the target task. To do this, we must first describe the requirements that the learners should be able to meet when working on the target task (Ende et al., 2013).

Research on task-based learning has been conducted by (Boraie et al., 2019) in the English education program at the American University in Cairo. The research was conducted through learning planning, process, experience and evaluation of curriculum innovations that are implemented in task-based learning. Task-based learning eliminates textbooks and replaces them with digital learning materials and uses performance appraisal tools as a substitute for tests. The findings show that even though there are positive attitudes towards task-based learning, it is still necessary to get used to changing the grammar-focused approach and selecting strategies that implement task-based learning through learning innovations and the use of digital media. In line with the findings by (Boraie et al., 2019), (Moore, 2018) stated that task-based learning uses tasks as the core for designing the syllabus, while the concept of a communicative approach is not only the task that becomes a benchmark for competence achieved but also linguistic competence, function, skills, lexis or concepts. Task-based learning is the development of a communicative approach that requires teachers not only to focus on language delivery but also to teach the language by combining the material presented and the methods to deliver it.

This research was conducted in order to provide an overview of how teachers in Indonesia can plan their learning by using task-based learning (TBL) principles that do not focus only on grammar and unsystematic exercises. Through the principles of TBL, it can be seen to what extent teachers can plan their learning to prepare students mastering German language competencies and use them in the real life as an implementation of life-based learning.

1.1. Task-based learning (TBL)

Task-based learning (TBL) is a learning approach that is currently being discussed in foreign language learning classes. Several research results indicate that this approach can produce effective learning. In Indonesia, (Kusnawati, 2014) has tried to implement TBL in French class. The results of her research indicate that TBL can improve students' writing skills and their participation in the learning process in the classroom. The increase in value and learning activity is also seen in the results of research by (Desmayenni et al., 2012) at the high school level. Meanwhile, (Ruso, 2007) examined the effect of TBL in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) class in Turkey. The results of his research indicate that TBL can help improve the abilities and motivation of learners and help improve the learning process in the classroom. These studies show that the

approach first introduced by Prabhu in an English class in Bangalore (India) can be an alternative model of foreign language learning.

TBL is a foreign language learning approach where students learn to communicate in the target language by doing assignments in class. TBL is oriented to develop learners' language competencies by providing assignments and then using language to complete them. The main focus in this learning approach is task completion that enables learners to work at their own pace, within their own language level and area of interest using the target language (Hashemi et al., 2012). The tasks can be in the form of tasks that are often encountered in everyday life such as talking on the phone, writing SMS / E-mails, baking cakes, etc. In the process of completing these tasks, learners understand, imitate, produce, and interact using the target language by focusing on meaning, not on language structure (Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; D. Willis & Willis, 2007). According to (J. Willis, 1996) the purpose of a task is to create a real goal of language use and provide a natural context for language learning. Each topic or theme can bring up various types of tasks which can be seen in the task typology according to (J. Willis, 1996) as described in Figure 1.
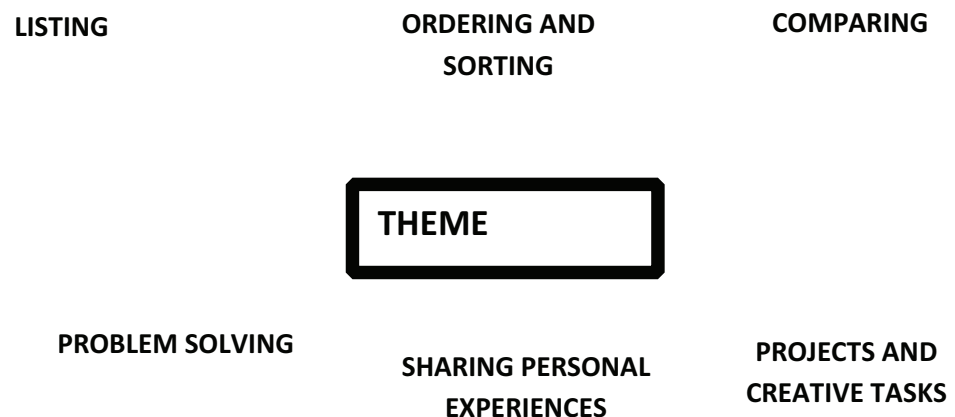
LISTING	ORDERING AND SORTING	COMPARING

THEME

PROBLEM SOLVING	SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	PROJECTS AND CREATIVE TASKS

Figure 1: TBL framework (six task types by Willis).

Listing task could be brainstorming and fact-finding. The outcomes are completed list or draft mind map. The example of **ordering and sorting** is sequencing, ranking, categorizing, and classifying, such as ordering from most important to least important (Herrin, 2009). Learners are required to order a set of information and to sort according to specified criteria. **Comparing** task are matching, finding similarities, and finding differences. The outcomes could be items appropriately matched or assembled, or the identification of similarities and/or differences. **Problem solving** task could be analysing real situations, analysing hypothetical situations, reasoning, and making decision. The outcome is solutions to the problem, which can then be evaluated. This can easily be

made more difficult by increasing the difficulty of the problem or creating the possibility for multiple solutions (Herrin, 2009). **Sharing personal experiences** task is for example narrating, describing, exploring and explaining attitudes, opinions, and reactions. The outcome is largely social. **Creative Tasks** could be in form of brainstorming, fact-finding ordering and sorting comparing problem solving and many others. The outcome is end product which can be appreciated by a wider audience.

Besides, according to (J. Willis, 1996) the TBL framework consists of three main phases with three basic conditions for language learning, namely pre-task, task cycle and language focus.

a. Pre-task: introduces a theme and a task, activates words and phrases related to the theme. It provides the necessary background, knowledge and procedure, introduces students to – and familiarizes them with – the topic and the task to be performed (Shehadeh, 2005).

b. Task-cycle: offers students the opportunity to use the language skills they already have to carry out tasks and then improve their language skills under the guidance of educators while planning their reports on the assignments. In the task phase, learners carry out a meaning-focused activity (Shehadeh, 2005). This phase offers students a holistic experience of the language used. There are three components of the task cycle:

1) Task: students use the language skills they are good at, working simultaneously, either in pairs or working in small groups to achieve task objectives.

2) Planning: forming a central part of the cycle. The role of the educator here is as a language adviser. Learners plan their reports effectively and maximize their learning opportunities.

3) Report: is the natural state of the task cycle. At this stage students convey their findings. Thus, the report stage provides learners with natural stimuli to increase and improvise their language competence. This phase presents a very real linguistic challenge to communicate clearly and accurately based on the natural and real context of the target language

c. Language focus: allows insight into the language-specific features that appear during the task cycle. In this phase students examine the forms of language in the text and see the use and meaning of lexical items. The focus of language has two components, namely analysis and practice. Table 1 is an example of a framework with the TBL approach.

TBL approach aims to develop language between learners by providing assignments and then using language as a "tool" to solve them. The three stages that need to be

TABLE 1: A TBL-approach framework.

Cycle	Phase	Activity	Objective
Pre-task	Introduction of theme and task	● Teacher (T) introduces the task (e.g., theme: *Hobby*) ● Learners (L) collect vocabularies that can be used to complete the task	● Introduces task ● Activates scheme
Task	Task	● L discuss with group about the sort of hobbies that people in Germany have. ● Every person in the group mentions the sort of hobby.	● Fluency ● Negotiates meaning"
	Planning	● –L classifies *Hobby* according to the season ● T monitors L.	● Fluency ● Focus on accuracy for the next step (presentation/ report)
	Report	● –L are presenting sort of hobbies that are used to do in Germany in each season. ● T clarifies.	● *Public speaking* ● Listen to information specifically
Language Focus	Analysis	● L watch video from native speaker about hobby and mark up important utterances ● T clarifies.	● Focus on form ● Increases L's awareness about the theme in terms of grammar
	Practice	● L repeat the important utterance and practice it in the next task (controlled task, for example: writing a letter)	● Language acquisition

considered in this learning model are pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. The main focus in this approach is more on meaning, not structure or grammar. Language rules are still considered in the last phase (language focus) but are not the main points and objectives of learning. The goal of the TBL approach is to create a real purpose for language use and provide a natural context in language learning.

1.2. Life-based learning

Life-based learning is a learning approach that makes real life as the main source of learning. Life-based learning is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills in understanding the nature of life, solving life problems, and living life in a balanced and harmonious manner (Hambali, 2017). Life-based learning emphasizes the concept that real learning is learning from life. Schools or other educational institutions are just one place to study life. True education for humans is life or experience and the environment itself. In Life-based learning, the main focus is the development of one's capabilities to contribute to the welfare and happiness of society.

According to (Staron et al., 2006) the capabilities are namely (1) having a balance between work, study and knowledge; (2) being able conduct research; (3) being able to acquire new life skills quickly; (4) being able to apply life skills and knowledge to the problem; (5) having the ability to solve problems in a new context; (6) being able to maintain a balance between productivity and creativity; and (7) being able to collaborate with virtual environments. Based on the learning needs of the 21st century, the 21st century curriculum design must be prepared based on the need, that is, higher education are to produce ready-to-work graduates. For this reason, universities must be able to create a ready-to-work graduates through lifelong learning that prepares the future and social interests of students (Rowe et al., 2012)

One of the needs in accordance with 21st century curriculum designs that are ready to produce a workforce according to (Grando & Calonge, 2014) is through the provision of digital laboratories. The facilities are prepared to comply with the realities that have been found in real life so that students get a learning experience. (Correia, 2014) argues that the ideal work-based curriculum approach is to place students ready to become partners in the workforce. This approach encourages universities to produce graduates who are ready to work, think critically, solve problems faced, and take the initiative.

Through life-based learning students can recognize various learning sources in every learning event and experience. A person's learning intelligence can be seen from his ability to recognize unlimited learning sources (internet) or certain events that have been and are happening. Therefore, it can be said that learning requires a balance between self-integrity and necessity or usefulness. Good learning is learning something that is useful and beneficial, because the responsibility for learning lies in each individual person. Learning must be continuing throughout life from various sources. Each individual needs to take responsibility for designing his or her own learning and selecting the most appropriate options to achieve personal and professional goals.

2. Method

This study used a qualitative research approach. The research data in this study are Lesson Plans (RPP) for German language subjects at the high school level that are developed by German language teachers. The collaborator, as German language learning experts and collaborative partners in this research, analysed the lesson plans to give comments and input. The analysis was carried out by examining carefully and criticizing sharply to get an overview of the learning planning in German subject based on the

TBL approach. The results of the analysis are used as material to formulate policies that support research objectives and improve the quality of German language learning.

The types of data in this study cover (1) the analysis results of the lesson plan document from 30 German Language teachers by collaborative research partners and (2) the results of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with the research team. The data were used to describe the feasibility of the lesson plan according to international German language learning standards with a TBL approach that used *Rückwärtsplanning* model. The data results were analysed based on discussion reports with the following steps: (1) Preparing FGD reports, (2) Collecting answers and suggestions from the results of the FGD to answer the research objectives, (3) Grouping opinions according to issues or relevant topics.

3. Finding and Discussion

The German lesson plan documents were analysed to determine whether it is in accordance with TBL approach. The analysis was carried out by researchers and collaborators using the principles of TBL. Based on the discussion on the analysis of the RPP document for German subjects, the following results were found. The lesson plans by teachers have applied the principles of task-based learning and are in accordance with the specified competencies as in the German language learning syllabus for high school. Teachers provide assignments that are encountered in everyday life to develop learners' language competencies (Hashemi et al., 2012; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; D. Willis & Willis, 2007; J. Willis, 1996). Even so, teachers still find it difficult to determine exercises that support the assigned task. These problems cause the exercises to be less systematic.

In addition, it was found that some teachers still had difficulty ordering the exercises systematically. It caused more exercises to be added to prepare the task. Arranging the right exercises requires appropriate learning resources for both online and offline learning. For this reason, it requires the ability of teachers to choose the right material according to their learning needs. Choosing the right material could help learners to complete their task. Teachers have to consider how to choose or design the material for the learners. Thus, (Howard & Major, 2004) suggest guidelines for designing effective materials, such as (1) be contextualised, (2) stimulate interaction and be generative in terms of language, (3) encourage learners to develop learning skills and strategies, (4) allow for a focus on form as well as function, (5) offer opportunities for integrated language use, (6) authentic, (7) link to each other to develop a progression of skills,

understandings and language items, (8) attractive, (9) have appropriate instructions, and (10) flexible. However, (Howard & Major, 2004) suggest those guidelines in English subject context. Teachers have to consider and adapt it in German learning context based to their learners' needs.

In general, German subject teachers can understand the concept of TBL which is in accordance with the concept of life-based learning. This can be seen from the determination of tasks that are close to real life. Selection of material from various learning sources is still needed so that teachers can arrange appropriate exercises. The use of media [video, images and audio] and e-learning is an alternative that can be used to prepare students to complete the tasks. It supports (Grando & Calonge, 2014) opinion that to answer the needs of 21st learning outcomes is through the provision of digital laboratories.

The learning resources that have been used so far have not met the needs of students due to various limitations, including the availability of e-learning access. To overcome the limitations of e-learning as a learning resource, it is necessary to conduct training and collaboration between teachers in the Indonesian German Language Teachers Association (IGBJI) as a means of exchanging information about the existing e-learning context, or even collaborating to create e-learning content or new products that can be easily accessed by students.

It takes the teacher's ability to choose a method that places students as the main actors of learning in order to improve student competence. The method must be adapted to the provided material, the learner's language level and the facilities they have. Those needs could be supported by TBL approach because this learning approach enables learners to work at their own pace, within their own language level and area of interest using the target language (Hashemi et al., 2012). Besides, teachers must be able to determine appropriate and actual learning resources so that students can be properly facilitated.

The exercises that have been arranged have not fully prepared students for independent study. For this reason, teachers must be able to recommend internet links for independent study. Thus, e-learning and digital laboratories in this context is important to encourage learners to study more independently (Grando & Calonge, 2014). In addition, teachers should continue to improve themselves in terms of their language skills and the latest didactic methods.

Based on the results of the group discussion forum that is conducted by researchers and collaborators from the PPPTK Bahasa Jakarta (Center for the Development and Empowerment of Educators and Education Personnel for Language), several things were

formulated that could be used as input for the lesson plan with TBL approach. (1) The learning objectives must be clearly formulated; (2) The suitability of the exercise with the learning objectives includes: (a) presents oral or written texts using German according to the CEFR level, (b) presents exercises to train the use of speech, vocabulary, grammar, to communicate both written and spoken in a particular context, and (c) presents exercises for communicating with themes that are already mastered and interesting for students, both written and oral. (3) The clarity level of the exercises includes: (a) learning using a variety of methods by utilizing various channels, (b) learning materials can be used in a relevant way in real life, and (c) learning grammar and vocabulary to support language skills. (4) The level of truth of the material in the exercise, which includes: (a) the suitability of the exercises with the learning needs of levels A1 and A2, (b) learning materials are related to situations that are close to everyday life, (c) learning materials are presented in a variety of ways. and interesting, (d) the learning material connects previous knowledge, (e) the exercises consider individual differences. (5) The accuracy of the presentation of social interactions in the exercise includes: (a) integrating group work with project work and using various media that are used proportionally, (b) and learning using various social interactions.

The findings above indicate that TBL requires teacher competence in determining new tasks and choosing the right exercises that are needed to prepare students to complete the tasks. TBL can accommodate current learning needs, that students' German language competencies must be matched with the objectives of the learning.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

As an effort to implement the principles of life-based learning and to improve student capability in mastering and using German, an appropriate approach is needed. TBL approach supports learning that prioritizes life-based learning. The assignments and exercises that are arranged gradually are expected to help develop the learners' German language competencies. The selection of the right tasks and exercises are needed so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally.

The study results showed that most of the lesson plans for German subject that have been made by the teachers had already adapted the TBL approach with the *Rückwärts-planung* planning model. However, the teacher still has difficulty in determining the right exercises to prepare tasks, so that these exercises do not support the achievement of learning objectives. In addition, teacher competence needs to be improved in preparing exercises that are oriented towards students' German language skills, utilizing media

and learning resources that are in accordance with the demands of learning using e-learning facilities.

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