The Text-based Integrated Approach to Language Teaching: Its Meaning and Classroom Application

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Abstract

The Text-based Integrated Approach is one of the co-methodologies in the teaching of language such as English at senior secondary schools in Zambia. As a co- methodology, teachers are expected to understand and fully implement it in language teaching. This article aims at discussing the Text-based Integrated Approach by outlining its major characteristics, merits, demerits and how it can be implemented in a language class. The successful teaching and learning of language hinges on the teachers' use of appropriate approaches and methodologies in their teaching. This article provides a theoretical and conceptual understanding of the method and provide insights on how the method can be implemented in the classroom. It ends by shedding light on the implications that emanate from the scope of the method on pedagogy and language teaching research.

Keywords: English, Implement, Co-methodology, Curriculum and Text-based Integrated Approach.

Introduction

The Text-based Integrated Approach is an approach which was developed from Halliday's Functional Linguistics (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011; Halliday, 1978). It aims at developing learners who can engage meaningfully with different texts in different contexts. The Text-based Integrated Approach means that a series of lessons probably one or two weeks' work will comprise a unit

which centre around a written text. This will have to be chosen carefully by the teacher for its suitability in terms of interest, level of difficulty, and appropriateness to the learners. The selected text should cover a number of language uses and a variety of topics should be chosen from a number of sources. The text should lead to a number of topics such as word study, vocabulary extension, cohesion and coherence, oral discussions, written comprehension, summaries, note taking and note making and composition that are communicative in nature. The teacher's deliberate decision to select a communicative text is supported by Mwanza (2016) who reported that, lessons should comprise communicative activities such as drama, role play, and simulation.

Conceptualization of the Text -Based Integrated Approach

The Text-based Integrated Approach was formed out of Halliday's (1978) theory of language as Social semiotic theory that is language with which people make meanings. As the name implies, Text based Integrated approach develops communicative competence in learners through mastering different types of texts. The Text-based Integrated Approach means that teaching should focus on all the four language skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). All activities are designed with reference to a particular text.

Arimbawa (2012) emphasizes that the Text-based Integrated Approach is based on the notion that learning to use English is improved when teachers introduce learners to complete spoken and written texts within an appropriate situation. This entails that the Text-based Integrated Approach plays an important role in ensuring that learners' communicative competence is developed.

Definitions and Meaning of Text-Based Integrated Approach

Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) defines Text based Integrated approach as "the teaching of language built on the exposure to, and the

handling and manipulation of different text types." It is an approach which helps learners be able to handle a variety of texts to help them use language effectively. Text-based Integrated Approach helps learners to comprehend not only language but also other non-linguistic texts. In essence, TBIA allows learners to improve their communicative competence. Kress (2010) asserts that a text conveys meaning through a combination of two or more modes with each mode performing its task and function in the meaning making process. A text can exist by itself or it can be a complete spoken utterance or a written message. Different texts have different purposes and hence organised in different ways with different language features.

Crystal (1992) defines a text as "a piece of naturally occurring spoken, written, or signed discourse identified for the purpose of analysis." He adds that it is often a language unit with a definable communicative function such as a conversation or a poster. Teaching English using a text requires a particular context in which it is found. The use of text in a particular context is cardinal to meaning making in language teaching and learning. Thornbury (2005) postulates that language always happens as text and not as isolated words and sentences. It is therefore important for the teachers to be wary that teaching foreign languages should be based on handling texts either written or spoken.

Tingting (2011) adds that Text-based Integrated Approach implies learning target words through reading texts such as acquiring words' meaning and their typical language environment from texts. TBIA seeks to develop learners' communicative competence through mastering different types of texts. It should be borne in mind that texts cannot be limited to passages in the traditional text books provided in schools. Richards and Schmidt (2010:604) defined Text-based Integrated Approach as "a methodology that focuses on teaching explicitly about the features of spoken and written texts and links to the cultural context of their use".

Tsakona (2015) opines that the key to Text-based Integrated Approach to language teaching is that language is always used as a text in relation to a communicative setting. She argues that the aim of the Text-based Integrated Approach is to encourage learners to produce and understand oral and written discourse in various natural or stimulated communicative setting in which they participate with a specific and explicit intention. This entails the use of texts must wholly be hinged on a particular context from which learners will fully understand the setting from which the text occurs. The Text-based Integrated Approach was influenced by Systemic Functional Linguistics. The systemic functional linguistics approach is based on the work of linguists such as Michael Halliday and J.R. Martin. Their view of language puts emphasis on the significance of context in all forms of communication. Haliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics hinges on the premise that language is functional and therefore cannot be detached from the social context of the learner (Halliday, 1985). Therefore this study proposes the use of texts familiar to the learners' social context.

According to Halliday (1985), a text cannot exist without a context. A context or the environment in which the text unfolds is always relevant when interpreting the meaning of the text. Context serves to make a bridge between the text and the situation in which texts actually occur (Halliday, 1985). By context of situation, he means the situation in which a text is both produced and read. To further elaborate the concept, Halliday (1985) cites three dimensions of discourse: field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the nature of the social action; tenor refers to the participants and mode refers to the role of the language.

In SFL, any act of communication (oral, written, signed or multimodal) has context, establishes relationships and is organised in different ways. This means that linguistic resources are deployed to realise ideational, interpersonal and textual

meanings termed metafunctions which co-occur in any piece of discourse (text) but are amenable to separate analysis (Martin and White, 2005).

The essence of teaching English as a second language (ESL) is to enable learners acquire the communicative ability to share knowledge and be able to grasp concepts in English. Hence, it is imperative that learners become communicative competent in language to ensure that nothing eludes them in their quest to get information in a foreign language. Hymes in Freeman (2000:121) stated that 'being able to communicate requires more than linguistic competence but communicative competence that is the ability to know, when, how and what to say to whom'. The competence in English language as a foreign language helps the students to express ideas and feelings and use the language in society. Teachers must have the professional competence to deliver English lessons well.

Hailong (1991) adds that TBIA does not only help learners develop communicative competence by dealing correctly with language usage but by helping them use language in appropriate real situations. Dammacco (2010) argues that tasks given in TBIA must comprise those tasks that should create a motive for learners to communicate effectively. The notion of communicative competence is highly relevant to this study as the English language Senior Syllabus recommends that teaching of English language should produce learners who are able to communicate effectively in various social contexts (CDC, 2013). Communicative Competence as espoused by the syllabus should not only prepare learners for examinations but should prepare them for the world of work.

Characteristics of the Text-Based Integrated Approach

Text based integrated approach like any other approach has its own features. The following are some of the features which defines the approach. Firstly, in Text based integrated approach teaching is characterised by natural language use (Mickan, 2011). This implies teaching of language should be conducted where there is purposeful use of language. It also entails that the unnatural use of language such as rote learning should be avoided.

Secondly, teachers choose texts relevant to leaners and their environment (Vester, 2005). The text chosen must also be of interest to learners. Learners learn best when they are taught what is applicable in their daily lives. If learners are not taught what happens in their daily lives, they may have problems in understanding the concepts being taught. There is also the aspect of making sense of texts from the beginning. Learners' familiarity with certain texts, their purposes and contexts of use positions them to make meanings from texts in a target language. Furthermore, there is use of language for real purposes in lessons. Texts enable lessons for authentic communication.

Text based Integrated Approach allows the teachers to use texts which must be tailored to class communities. The teaching objectives must correspond to the function and purpose of the speech community (Thornbury, 2005). Learners derive interest from learning what happens in their communities. This allows them to relate what occurs in their community to the classroom situation. The prior experience of what happens in their society prepares them to work with texts. In Text based Integrated approach, there is language awareness which is the analysis of the lexico-grammar of texts (function of grammar and vocabulary together in texts). The approach to teaching grammar is through the analysis of texts (Mickan, 2011). Texts are functional in

different contexts for realization of different purposes. Learners learn effectively when both grammar and vocabulary are taught simultaneously.

Text based integrated approach exposes learners to different literature through extensive reading and reading clubs. Extensive reading is a practical strategy for text based instruction. Learners access a variety of books, magazines, or selected databases and websites for selection of reading materials. The learners need to be exposed to different materials for effective learning to occur (Marina and Marmiene, 2006). As learners are exposed to reading different materials, it creates learner autonomy where learners have opportunities to select texts out of interest and to read them at leisure for pleasure or information. In cases where learners are not given chance to choose texts which may interest them, they may not focus their attention on what is being taught.

Text based Integrated Approach employs integrated skills and multimodality. Text based instruction integrates spoken and written language as in natural language use. The four language skills i.e. speaking, reading, listening and writing should not be taught in isolation (Hailong, 1991). Teaching should also involve the use of different modes for all learners to grasp the concepts easily.

Teaching Materials

The success of any teaching activity depends wholly on how it arouses interest in learners. Therefore, teaching materials provided by the teacher should instill enthusiasm in the learners to make learning successful. CDC (2012) recommends to teachers to carefully choose a text with particular reference to learners interest, suitability level of difficulty and appropriateness when using the Text-based Integrated Approach. Teachers are required to pick texts not only from traditional text books provided in

schools but also from a variety of sources including other subjects.

Mickan (2011) asserts that the aim of teaching is to immerse students in experiences with texts in order to reflect the richness of learners' everyday experience of texts. This means that teachers have to select and sequence texts for planned and direct instruction for a class to learn the texts for them to participate actively in the class community and the world at large.

Keshavarzi (2012:554) opines that "…all language teachers desire to equip learners with materials to improve their own future and become contributors of their own society rather than burdens on society and others." This means it is vital in TBIA for learners to be exposed to texts that will not only improve their performance in school work but also the society at large.

Arnold (1991) is a proponent of the view stating the use of authentic resources are no guarantee that purposeful and authentic language learning will occur because the use of authentic materials depends on the teaching and learning pedagogic content in which they are used. He adds that "the tension between the teaching–learning situation and the original communicative purpose of resources being used is resolved if different types of authenticity come together such as authentic materials and learners purposes, authentic materials and interactions, authentic participants and responses and authentic inputs and outputs" (Arnold 1991:237). This view espoused by Arnold (1991) in regard to the use of authentic materials which TBIA highly recommends in a classroom situation, can expose learners to actual and real modern day language use rather than idealized grammatical structures hence making learners to get closer in contact with the real world of the target language and culture.

Mohlabi-Tlaka (2016) outlines the activities learners should be exposed to in TBIA as stories, media texts such as newspaper reports, visual texts such as posters and the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) postulate

that the authenticity of purpose must be considered when authentic resources are used in language learning since activities and tasks can limit opportunities for learners' engagement. They cite a text reading task where students engage with superficial issues such as locating information in the text, yet the same text could be used for developing interpretation, analysis and reflection, personal engagement with themes and issues, comparison with other texts or questioning aspects of the text's message.

Mickan (2011, 2012) describes using authentic texts in language learning as resources for the learner to see and make meaning of language in action. This is also confirmed by Wells (1990) who postulates that the use of authentic texts in the classroom provides the opportunity for the learners to experience language in action.

Larsen-Freeman (2002) postulates that through the use of English medium texts language learners are introduced to the real context and natural examples of language. Through this perspective, texts can further be orientated as a text devised originally for fulfilling a social purpose within a language community. This is confirmed by Melvin and Stout (1987) who found that students who use authentic materials to study culture in the language classroom gain a better understanding of the practical benefits of being able to use real language in in real world circumstances. According to Arnold (1991), because authentic materials are developed or created within the cultural context of target language speakers, they carry with them values and ways of communicating particular to that culture.

Tafani (2009) recommends the use of magazines in the classroom situation. He adds that magazines in the target language can be useful for language learning because of the target language cultural content. The use of magazines in language learning is vital in that they are considered to be linguistically up to date thereby providing valuable linguistic data and also motivating for

students to work with in classes. The use of up to date teaching and learning materials is recommended at all levels of Education to add meaning to the learning process (Mkandawire and Illon, 2018).

Feez and Joyce (in Richards, 2005) point out the achievement of communicative competence as involving the mastery of different texts such as procedures, explanations, expositions, recounts, reports, narratives, conversation and short functional texts. This means materials given to learners should have content which denotes any of the above type of texts. This exposes learners to a variety type of texts thereby improving their communicative competence.

Classroom Implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach

The successful implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach is realized through following the five stages which the teacher has to go through to develop the learners' language abilities in speaking, writing, reading and listening. Fig.1 below illustrates the teaching cycle which has been adopted for the successful implementation of the Text-based Integrated Approach.
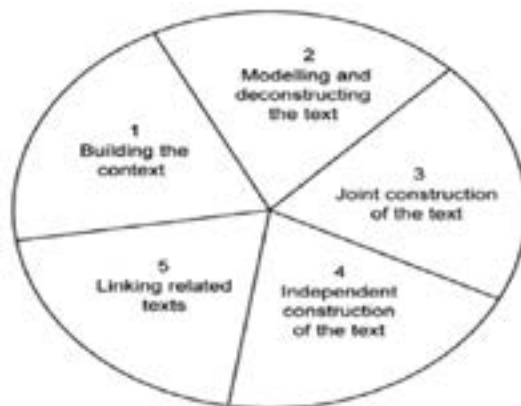

Fig 1: *Teaching and Learning Cycle (Feez and Joyce, 1998).*

Step1: Building the Context (preparation activities)

The focus at this stage is on the contents of the text which the teacher introduces by generating maximum background so that learners would be able to write about the text eventually. Learners communicate in a language that seem convenient for better self-expression and sharing ideas (Mkandawire, 2018). Building the context aims to help the learners to understand the text type they are learning or focus on, the audience for a particular text and the context in which it occurs. This is done to help the learner's schemata (knowledge stored in memory already) (O'Malley et.al, 1996). It also helps the learners to familiarize themselves with the topic in general and to raise the students' interest and create expectation.

The activities which follow this stage are developing vocabulary, brainstorming, predicting, putting related words into groups, eliciting or pre-teaching key vocabulary items, matching key vocabulary to pictures, predicting content of the text from visuals (pictures, videos) and previewing the text type from key words, expressions and discourse markers. Hammond et al. (1992) posit that it is this stage where the teacher builds up and extends vocabulary relevant to the text type.

Step 2: Modelling (Showing the learners what to do)

Modelling means showing the learners what to do, demonstrating and practicing the steps, as preparation for dependent/joint and independent work. This is the stage where the teacher shows the learners what they need to do. The teacher should aid learners build up their understanding about the purpose of the text, its general language features so that learners can gain enough background knowledge. This stage helps learners to investigate the structural pattern and language features, comparing the model

with other examples of the same text type. Typical examples at this level include giving examples of text that the students will produce later. The example can either be oral or text. In an oral text, the learners can listen and respond to texts with similar communicative purpose (Abbaszadeb, 2013). The teacher and learners must discuss the purposes for which the text is used in English outlining the features of the text type. The text that is discussed should be similar to the one that is going to be used in the joint construction stage to enable the flow of ideas, understanding and transfer of knowledge. Metalanguage such as organizational structure, tense, connectives and text types should be introduced into the discussion (Akinyeye, 2012).

Step 3: Joint construction of the Text

The stage focuses on the illustration of the process of creating a text. The teacher and the learners decide on a topic. They both write the text together using the mind map developed in the first stage. The learners must do something more practical in writing (Dirgeyasa, 2016). The text to be written should be initiated by the learners while the teacher assists. At this stage, learners should contribute to the construction of a whole examples of the text type. Here, a text may be jointly constructed by the whole class, by a small group or by a teacher and child during discussion. The teacher should gradually reduce the contribution as learners move towards being able to construct texts on their own. Prior to writing, learners may gather information by observing something, reading various sources, discussing with friends, visiting certain places among others (Kusumaningrum, 2015).

Step 4: Independent construction of the Text

The learners choose a text that is related to the one that is discussed in the first and second stages. Since they have enough

scaffolding on the topic, learners can now write independently or in pairs. They may consult their teacher to make a first draft. They will use knowledge from previous stages to present texts in listening, reading comprehension, speaking, oral presentations and writing tasks (Dirgeyasa, 2016). The teacher is encouraged to conduct independent construction stage more than once in order to develop learners accordingly (Firkins et al., 2007).

Step 5: Linking to related texts

At this level, learners now have to reflect on the texts learnt and compare the use of text types across different fields. Learners can also role play what would happen if the same text is used by people in different roles and relationships.

Mendiknas (2007) argues that elaboration is done in the joint construction stage and confirmation of whether what has been learnt is understood is done in the independent construction stage where learners work independently (Richards, 2006).

Advantages of the Text Based Integrated Approach

Text-based Integrated Approach has a number of advantages one brings to the teaching and learning of English language. The following are the advantages of the Text-based Integrated Approach. It expands capacity to express meanings (Mickan, 2011). This implies that learners' ability to express meaning is expanded. Further, the multimodal learning enhances comprehension, memorization and learning. It also builds potential for understanding and expression of meanings which helps them participate in community practices with language (Hyland, 2007). TBIA provides foundation and context for teaching all language skills and for teaching learners new things they had not experienced before. Learners link stories they read to their daily lives which increases their vocabulary (Kress, 1985).

The approach is designed to help learners build up confidence in different contexts and helps them become competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts (Mohlabi-Tlaka, 2016).

Disadvantages of the Text-Based Integrated Approach

Despite having a number of merits, the Text-based Integrated Approach has not been spared from criticism. Firstly, there is also the over-reliance on the text (Burn and Richards, 2012). The Text-based Integrated Approach has been criticized for putting so much emphasis on a text. Some scholars postulate that this limits the learners' thinking to texts (Richards, 2006). Further, it has also been criticized because of its five phase cycle for its successful implementation. They argue that five phase cycle is applicable to all the four language skills which may prove boring to second language learners. Even so, the merits of the Text-based Approach outweigh the demerits making it an appropriate approach for ESL learners.

Implications on Pedagogy and Research

Clearly, the text based integrated approach has a lot of advantages and if implemented well, it can engender critical thinking and analysis in learners. However, this requires that teachers are adequately trained to teach English using the method. Teacher training has been implicated in many studies (Manchishi and Mwanza, 2013), Mulenga (2015) and Manchishi and Mwanza (2018) as not being adequate thereby negatively affecting the successful implementation of recommended methods of teaching in schools. This implies that teacher training institutions should ensure that teachers are equipped both the theoretical and practical knowledge upon graduation (Chileshe, Mkandawire and Tambulukani, 2018). This means that during training, students teachers should be exposed to the practicalities of this method because as Manchishi and Mwanza (2016) put it, the role of peer teaching/micro teaching is to help the notice teacher relate theory to practice be-

cause they can be placed in a real school classroom.

The other implication is on teaching and learning materials in schools. Clearly, the text based integrated approach requires that the school is stocked with text books or any other relevant texts for use. This means that governments and school administrations should provide school materials if this method is to be applied in the right way and in order to yield positive results from the method.

Further, there is need for continuing professional development activities among practicing teachers in order to acquaint them with skills and ideas on how the method is used. This is so because teachers' misconceptions about the method can lead to either non application of the method and at most, wrong implementation of the method (Mwanza, 2017).

In addition, it has been observed under disadvantages of the txt based integrated approach that it is being criticized for creating boredom among pupils. In addition, the method is being criticized for its 'over' reliance on the text. From this criticism, it is clear that potentially, both teachers and pupils may develop negative attitudes towards he method despite being the recommended method in countries such as Zambia. Thus, there is need to emphasize the benefits of the method to both teachers and pupils in order for them to develop positive attitudes towards the method which would in turn be central to the successful implementation of the text based integrated approach in the classroom. As Mwanza (2017) argued, teachers and pupils attitudes have a bearing on the success or failure of a curriculum and in this case, the success and failure of the classroom implementation of the text based integrated approach.

Finally, there is generally some research oversight in investigating the text based integrated approach. While most studies have concerted on the communicative language teaching, very little research has been dedicated to the text based integrated approach despite its perceived advantages. Thus, there is need for classroom research on the text based integrated research to unravel how teachers understand the method and how they practically use it in the classroom in different contexts/countries.

Conclusion

The article has attempted to give an overview of the Text based Integrated Approach by outlining its major characteristics and how it can be implemented in a classroom situation. The paper has defined the Text-based integrated approach, cited the merits and demerits of the approach and has also discussed how the Text-based Integrated Approach can be employed in a classroom situation. Text-based integrated approach, being a platform for learners to become competent, confident, critical readers, writers and viewers of text, implies that teachers should be conversant with the philosophy driving the approach and be well equipped with skills for effective lesson delivery and management of the curriculum.

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