

A SYSTEM OF TASKS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES BASED ON P. FREIRE'S PROBLEM-POSING EDUCATION AND DIALOGIC EDUCATION TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract

The contemporary paradigm of foreign language education requires a shift from transmission-oriented teaching towards learner-centered, dialogic, reflective, and socially meaningful learning. In this context, the pedagogical ideas of Paulo Freire provide a significant theoretical and methodological basis for reconsidering the organization of English language classes. This article examines the potential of Freire's problem-posing education and dialogic education for developing a system of communicative and critical-thinking-oriented tasks in English language teaching. Particular attention is paid to the principles of dialogue, learner agency, critical consciousness, problematization, reflection, collaboration, and the connection between language learning and learners' real-life experiences. Based on these principles, a system of English language tasks is proposed, consisting of five interconnected stages: contextualization, problematization, dialogic exploration, collaborative production, and critical reflection. Examples of tasks for speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and integrated language skills are presented. The article argues that the integration of Freirean pedagogy into English language teaching can transform the classroom into a dialogic learning environment in which students are not passive recipients of linguistic information but active participants in constructing meaning. The proposed task system can contribute to the development of communicative competence, critical thinking, learner autonomy, intercultural awareness, and reflective skills.

Keywords: Paulo Freire, problem-posing education, dialogic education, English language teaching, critical pedagogy, task-based learning, communicative competence, critical thinking, learner autonomy, dialogic tasks, English language classroom.

Introduction

Contemporary English language education is increasingly concerned with developing learners who are capable not only of using grammatical structures and vocabulary accurately but also of communicating ideas, interpreting information critically, participating in social interaction, and expressing independent opinions. The expansion of digital communication, globalization,



multicultural interaction, and artificial intelligence has significantly transformed the communicative environment in which foreign languages are learned and used. Consequently, traditional teacher-centered models based primarily on explanation, memorization, repetition, and reproduction of predetermined answers are becoming insufficient for achieving the broader educational objectives of contemporary language teaching.

One of the influential educational thinkers whose ideas provide a theoretical basis for reconsidering the relationship between teacher, learner, knowledge, and communication is Paulo Freire. His critical pedagogy challenges the traditional model of education in which teachers are positioned as the primary holders of knowledge and learners are treated as passive recipients. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) criticizes what he calls the “banking” concept of education and proposes an alternative model based on dialogue, problem-posing, critical consciousness, participation, and transformation.

Although Freire’s pedagogical theory was developed primarily in the context of social and emancipatory education, its principles have considerable relevance to foreign language teaching. English language learning itself is fundamentally dialogic: learners acquire communicative competence through interaction, negotiation of meaning, questioning, interpretation, collaboration, and reflection. Therefore, Freire’s concepts of problem-posing and dialogue can be transformed into practical methodological principles for designing English language tasks.

The purpose of this article is to theoretically substantiate and practically present a system of English language tasks based on Freire’s problem-posing education and dialogic education technologies. The article focuses particularly on how problem-posing and dialogue can be incorporated into speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and integrated-skills activities.

The objectives of the research are:

- to clarify the pedagogical essence of Freire’s problem-posing and dialogic education;
- to identify the methodological potential of these approaches in English language teaching;
- to formulate principles for designing Freirean English language tasks;
- to propose a systematic sequence of tasks for English language classes;
- to demonstrate how such tasks can promote communicative competence, critical thinking, learner autonomy, and reflection.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Problem-Posing Education

Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy is closely connected with the concepts of dialogue, critical consciousness, human agency, and transformation. According to Freire (1970), education should not merely transmit information but should create conditions in which learners critically examine their reality and participate in the construction of knowledge.

Freire contrasts traditional “banking education” with problem-posing education. In banking education, the teacher is generally perceived as the subject who knows, while learners are positioned as objects who receive, memorize, and reproduce knowledge. Such a model limits learners’ opportunities to question information and develop independent judgment.



Problem-posing education, by contrast, begins with questions, problems, situations, contradictions, and experiences that are meaningful to learners. Rather than simply providing answers, the teacher introduces a problem and facilitates collective inquiry.

In English language education, this principle can be interpreted methodologically as a shift from exercises that require only reproduction toward tasks that require learners to interpret, question, compare, evaluate, justify, and create.

For example, instead of asking students:

“What are the advantages of learning English?”

the teacher may formulate a problem:

“Why do some people have many years of English education but still find it difficult to communicate in real-life situations?”

The second question creates a space for inquiry. Students have to activate their linguistic knowledge while simultaneously examining a real educational phenomenon. Thus, language becomes not only an object of study but also a means of thinking and communication.

Problem-posing tasks therefore have a dual function. First, they provide opportunities for language practice. Second, they stimulate higher-order cognitive activity.

2. Dialogic Education as a Methodological Basis for English Language Teaching

Dialogue is central to Freire’s educational philosophy. For Freire, dialogue is not simply a technique for classroom conversation. It is a way of establishing a relationship in which participants listen to each other, exchange perspectives, question assumptions, and construct meaning collectively.

In English language teaching, dialogue is often associated with speaking practice. However, a Freirean interpretation of dialogue extends beyond conventional question-and-answer activities. Genuine dialogue requires learners to contribute ideas, respond to alternative perspectives, challenge arguments respectfully, and reflect on what they have learned.

Therefore, a dialogic English classroom should be characterized by several features:

active learner participation;

reciprocal communication;

open-ended questions;

multiple possible interpretations;

respect for different perspectives;

collaborative meaning-making;

reflection;

teacher facilitation rather than domination.

The teacher remains an important participant in the educational process but does not monopolize communication. The teacher creates communicative situations, asks provocative questions, provides linguistic support, facilitates discussion, and encourages students to formulate their own conclusions.

This approach is particularly relevant to the development of speaking skills. Traditional speaking exercises frequently involve predictable questions with predetermined answers. Freirean dialogic tasks, in contrast, can create authentic communicative needs.



For example:

Traditional task:

“Describe your favorite city.”

Dialogic task:

“Imagine that your city has received funding to improve only one area: education, transport, healthcare, or environmental protection. Which area should receive priority? Explain your decision and respond to at least two alternative proposals.”

The second task requires students to communicate, negotiate, justify, listen, and make decisions.

3. Principles for Designing a Freirean System of English Language Tasks

A system of tasks based on problem-posing and dialogic education should not consist of isolated discussion activities. It should represent an interconnected methodological structure in which each task prepares learners for the next stage of cognitive and communicative development.

The following principles can be proposed.

3.1. Principle of meaningful contextualization

Tasks should be connected with situations that learners can recognize from their social, educational, professional, or personal experience.

Potential contexts include:

education;

social media;

environmental problems;

technology;

artificial intelligence;

employment;

cultural identity;

globalization;

urban development;

youth culture.

Meaningful contexts increase learners' motivation to communicate because language is used to discuss issues that have relevance beyond the classroom.

3.2. Principle of problematization

A task should contain a problem, contradiction, dilemma, or question requiring interpretation.

Instead of:

“List five advantages of online learning.”

the task may be formulated as:

“Online learning provides flexibility, but many students experience reduced motivation. Is online education really more effective than face-to-face education? Under what conditions?”

Such a task encourages learners to move from listing information to analyzing relationships and conditions.



3.3. Principle of dialogic interaction

Tasks should require interaction between participants rather than individual reproduction of information.

The interaction can include:

pair discussion;
small-group discussion;
peer questioning;
debate;
role-play;
collaborative problem-solving;
peer feedback;
panel discussion.

3.4. Principle of learner agency

Learners should have opportunities to make decisions about the content, argument, examples, or final product.

For instance, students may select a social problem, research it, discuss possible solutions, and present their own recommendations.

3.5. Principle of critical reflection

Each task sequence should include reflection. Learners should consider not only what they learned but also how their opinions changed, which evidence influenced them, and which arguments they found convincing.

4. Structure of the Proposed System of Tasks

Based on the principles discussed above, a Freirean system of English language tasks can be organized into five interconnected stages:

This sequence integrates linguistic, communicative, cognitive, and reflective dimensions of language learning.

Stage 1. Contextualization

The purpose of the first stage is to activate learners' previous knowledge and personal experiences.

Task 1. "What Do You See?"

Students are presented with a photograph related to a contemporary social issue, such as young people using smartphones.

Students answer:

What can you see?

What do you think is happening?

What questions does the picture raise?

Does this situation exist in your community?

The teacher avoids immediately explaining the "correct" interpretation. Different interpretations are encouraged.

Language focus: descriptive vocabulary, present continuous, modal verbs, opinion expressions.



5. Problematisation Tasks

At this stage, learners move from observation to questioning.

Task 2. “The Smartphone Dilemma”

Students read the following situation:

“A university wants to introduce a rule prohibiting smartphones during English classes. Some teachers support the rule, while others believe that smartphones can improve learning.”

Students work in groups and discuss:

What are the advantages of smartphones in language learning?

What are the disadvantages?

Should students be allowed to use AI during English lessons?

Who should decide how technology is used in education?

What would be a fair policy?

Students must formulate their own position and support it with at least three arguments.

Language focus: modal verbs, conditionals, argumentation vocabulary.

Task 3. “Question the Assumption”

Students receive statements such as:

“Technology always improves education.”

“Native speakers are better English teachers.”

“Students learn English mainly to get better jobs.”

“AI will eventually replace language teachers.”

Students select one statement and answer:

Do you agree?

What evidence supports your position?

Can you think of an alternative perspective?

Under what circumstances might the opposite be true?

The task develops the ability to question assumptions rather than automatically accept them.

6. Dialogic Exploration Tasks

The third stage is based on structured interaction.

Task 4. “Four Perspectives”

The topic is:

“Should artificial intelligence be used in English language learning?”

Four groups receive different roles:

Group A – English language teachers;

Group B – university students;

Group C – parents;

Group D – educational policymakers.

Each group prepares arguments from its assigned perspective.

After preparation, representatives participate in a round-table discussion.

Students must:

present their position;

ask questions;

respond to opposing arguments;



identify areas of agreement;

negotiate a common recommendation.

The final product is a jointly developed classroom AI policy.

This activity demonstrates an important feature of dialogic pedagogy: knowledge is constructed through interaction among different perspectives.

7. Reading Tasks Based on Problem-Posing

Reading can also be transformed from comprehension checking into critical dialogue.

Task 5. “Read, Question, Respond”

Students read a short article about the impact of social media on language learning.

Instead of answering only factual comprehension questions, they complete three stages:

Stage A – Understand

What is the author’s main argument?

Stage B – Question

Which assumptions does the author make?

Stage C – Respond

Do you agree with the author? What evidence supports your position?

Students then compare their responses in pairs.

Task 6. “Whose Voice Is Missing?”

After reading a text, students identify:

whose perspective is represented;

whose perspective is absent;

what additional information is needed;

how the text might change if another group were represented.

This task is particularly relevant to Freirean pedagogy because it encourages learners to examine representation, voice, and perspective.

8. Speaking and Debate Tasks

Speaking tasks based on Freirean pedagogy should move beyond mechanical fluency practice.

Task 7. “Take a Position”

Topic:

“English should be a compulsory subject at university.”

Students position themselves along a continuum from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

They must explain their position to a partner.

Then students are asked:

“What argument could make you change your position?”

This question is important because critical dialogue does not simply require defending one’s initial opinion. It requires openness to reconsideration.

Task 8. “Community Problem-Solving”

Students imagine that their university has limited financial resources and can support only one project:

A. free English courses for local residents;

B. a new language laboratory;



C. scholarships for disadvantaged students;

D. an AI-supported learning platform.

Groups discuss the alternatives and reach a collective decision.

The final presentation must include:

the chosen option;

three supporting arguments;

two rejected alternatives;

reasons for rejecting them.

9. Writing Tasks Based on Dialogic and Problem-Posing Principles

Writing should also be connected with real communicative purposes.

Task 9. “Write to Change Something”

Students identify a problem at their university or local community.

Examples:

lack of English conversation clubs;

limited access to digital resources;

insufficient opportunities for international communication;

lack of quiet study spaces.

Students write a formal proposal to the university administration.

The proposal should include:

description of the problem;

evidence;

possible causes;

proposed solution;

expected benefits.

Students exchange their proposals and provide peer feedback.

Task 10. “Respond to an Opposing View”

Students write an argumentative paragraph based on the statement:

“Artificial intelligence makes students less independent.”

The paragraph must contain:

a clear position;

one supporting argument;

one counterargument;

a response to the counterargument;

a concluding statement.

This task combines language development with critical reasoning.

10. Vocabulary Development Through Problem-Posing

Vocabulary learning can also be integrated into critical dialogue.

Task 11. “Words in Context”

Students receive ten vocabulary items related to environmental problems:

pollution, sustainability, renewable energy, consumption, waste, climate change, conservation, resource, responsibility, policy.



Instead of simply matching words with definitions, students use them to discuss:

“Who is responsible for environmental problems: individuals, businesses, or governments?”

Students must use at least six target words during the discussion.

Thus, vocabulary becomes a tool for expressing ideas rather than an isolated memorization exercise.

11. Integrated Skills Task

Task 12. “English and Social Change”

Students complete a multi-stage project.

Step 1 – Reading:

Students read two contrasting texts about the role of English in global communication.

Step 2 – Critical analysis:

They identify the main arguments and assumptions.

Step 3 – Discussion:

Groups discuss whether English promotes global communication or contributes to linguistic inequality.

Step 4 – Research:

Students collect examples from their own educational or social environment.

Step 5 – Presentation:

Groups present their findings.

Step 6 – Reflection:

Students write a short reflection:

“Has your understanding of the role of English changed after this activity? Why?”

This integrated task demonstrates how Freirean pedagogy can connect receptive, productive, cognitive, and reflective dimensions of English language learning.

12. The Teacher’s Role in a Freirean English Classroom

The implementation of problem-posing and dialogic education requires a transformation of the teacher’s role. The teacher does not disappear from the educational process. Rather, the teacher becomes a facilitator, organizer, questioner, linguistic supporter, and reflective partner.

The teacher should:

formulate meaningful problems;

create an atmosphere of respect;

encourage multiple perspectives;

provide linguistic scaffolding;

facilitate interaction;

challenge unsupported assumptions;

encourage students to justify their opinions;

provide constructive feedback;

organize reflection.

Importantly, dialogic education does not mean that every student opinion is automatically accepted as correct. Critical dialogue requires evidence, reasoning, respectful disagreement, and willingness to reconsider one’s position.



Therefore, the teacher should distinguish between respecting a learner's right to express an opinion and accepting every opinion as equally justified.

13. Assessment of the Proposed Task System

Assessment within a Freirean English classroom should focus not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the quality of participation and reasoning.

The following criteria may be used:

Criterion	Indicators
Linguistic competence	Accuracy, vocabulary range, grammatical control
Communicative competence	Interaction, fluency, responsiveness
Critical thinking	Analysis, evaluation, inference, justification
Dialogic competence	Listening, questioning, responding, respecting alternative views
Learner autonomy	Independent decision-making and initiative
Reflection	Ability to evaluate one's learning and reconsider assumptions

A five-level scale can be used:

Level 1 – Reproductive: the learner mainly repeats information.

Level 2 – Descriptive: the learner expresses a basic opinion but provides limited justification.

Level 3 – Analytical: the learner provides arguments and examines alternative perspectives.

Level 4 – Critical: the learner evaluates evidence, challenges assumptions, and constructs reasoned conclusions.

Level 5 – Transformative: the learner critically analyses a problem, integrates different perspectives, proposes an original solution, and reflects on how the learning experience has changed their understanding.

Such assessment is consistent with the broader objectives of critical pedagogy because it recognizes learning as an intellectual and communicative process rather than merely the reproduction of linguistic forms.

14. Methodological Conditions for Effective Implementation

The successful implementation of Freirean tasks requires several methodological conditions.

First, the classroom environment should be psychologically safe. Learners should feel that they can express opinions without fear of humiliation.

Second, tasks should be linguistically accessible. Critical thinking cannot develop effectively if students are unable to express their ideas because of insufficient language proficiency. Therefore, teachers should provide useful vocabulary, sentence starters, discourse markers, and other forms of scaffolding.

Third, problems should be authentic and meaningful. Artificial problems with predetermined answers may reduce learner engagement.

Fourth, teachers should allow sufficient time for discussion and reflection. Critical thinking cannot be developed through rapid question-and-answer sequences alone.

Fifth, dialogic tasks should be systematic. One isolated debate cannot transform classroom pedagogy. The principles of problem-posing and dialogue should be incorporated across the curriculum.



Finally, digital and AI technologies can be incorporated as additional resources. However, learners should be encouraged to critically evaluate AI-generated information rather than accept it without verification. This creates an additional opportunity for developing digital critical literacy.

15. Discussion

The proposed system demonstrates that Freire's pedagogical concepts can be operationalized in English language teaching without reducing them to a collection of discussion techniques. The central methodological idea is the transformation of the learner's position from passive recipient to active participant in the construction of meaning.

In conventional language classrooms, communication is sometimes organized around predetermined linguistic targets. While such activities can be useful for controlled practice, they do not always provide sufficient opportunities for learners to formulate independent ideas. Freirean problem-posing tasks introduce an additional dimension. Learners use English to investigate questions, express experiences, challenge assumptions, negotiate meanings, and develop solutions.

This approach is particularly compatible with communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching. However, the Freirean perspective adds a stronger emphasis on critical consciousness, learner agency, dialogue, and social meaning.

The proposed system also creates opportunities for integrating the four major language skills. Reading becomes critical interpretation; speaking becomes dialogic interaction; writing becomes argumentation and reflection; vocabulary and grammar become resources for expressing meaningful ideas.

Consequently, language learning is no longer separated from intellectual development. Language serves simultaneously as the object of learning and as a medium through which learners interpret and discuss their world.

Conclusion

Paulo Freire's problem-posing education and dialogic education provide a valuable theoretical and methodological foundation for rethinking English language teaching in contemporary educational contexts. Their central principles—dialogue, problematization, learner agency, critical reflection, collaboration, and meaningful communication—can be effectively transformed into a system of English language tasks.

The proposed five-stage system consists of contextualization, problematization, dialogic exploration, collaborative production, and critical reflection. These stages create a coherent learning process in which learners first connect the topic with their experience, identify a problem, explore it through dialogue, collaboratively construct a response, and finally reflect on the learning process.

The proposed tasks demonstrate that Freirean pedagogy can be applied to speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and integrated-skills instruction. The tasks are designed not merely to increase the amount of English spoken in the classroom but to make communication purposeful, reflective, argumentative, and intellectually meaningful.



The implementation of such a system can contribute to the development of several interconnected competencies: communicative competence, critical thinking, learner autonomy, collaborative competence, intercultural awareness, and reflective ability.

At the same time, effective implementation requires appropriate pedagogical conditions, including a supportive classroom environment, linguistic scaffolding, authentic problems, sufficient time for dialogue, systematic reflection, and assessment criteria that recognize both linguistic and cognitive development.

Thus, the integration of Freire's problem-posing and dialogic education into English language teaching can contribute to a more learner-centered and intellectually active educational environment. In such a classroom, English is not merely learned as a system of linguistic forms but is used as a means of questioning, interpreting, communicating, and constructing meaning.

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