

Comptes rendus • Reviews

Johannes Eckerth and Sabine Siekmann (eds.). 2008. *Task-based language learning and teaching: Theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. 313 pp.

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Task-based language learning and teaching, edited by Johannes Eckerth and Sabine Siekmann, includes a collection of research articles on a variety of areas of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Its purpose is to disseminate research first presented in a conference session on TBLT (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Fremdsprachenforschung*, University of Munich, October 2005). As such, the intended audience for the book is mainly TBLT researchers.

The book is divided into three sections based on the area of research interest: classroom-based research, language and cognition, and task-based assessment. The chapters focus on the second language (L2) acquisition of English, German and Spanish in secondary and university educational settings in Asia, Europe and North America.

The section on classroom-based research includes 5 research articles. Michael Shart takes a sociocultural perspective to carrying out action research in a German (L2) university classroom in Japan. His research highlights the importance of contextualising TBLT in real classroom environments, as a task is affected by the classroom in which it is implemented.

Silvia Pesce investigated the effects of different knowledge sources (explicitly provided vs. student inducted) and type of task (cloze and narrative) on the learning of two Spanish past tenses by L1 German speakers. The results showed that learner-learner interactions, while completing the two tasks, were not affected by knowledge source. However, knowledge source did affect learning outcomes, with teacher-fronted learners being more accurate (although no statistical tests are reported). Task did affect learner-learner interactions, as the cloze task elicited a lot more discussion of form as opposed to lexical discussions with the narrative task.

Eckerth investigated learner-learner interactions during TBLT in terms of learning opportunities, processes and outcomes in a German L2 classroom with Anglophone students. He used both focused (consciousness-raising) and unfocused (decision-making/spot the difference) tasks. He found that, regardless of task, learners worked together, providing each other with feedback and testing hypotheses.

David Ishii investigated a possible means of providing feedback on learners' writing errors: language dia-logs. A language dia-log is a written feedback sheet that includes the learner's error, possible corrections, and other similar

errors that the learner can correct, a space for the learner to write similar example sentences and a request for the learner to provide his/her rule for this linguistic feature. Ishii found that this type of feedback was as effective in terms of promoting L2 development as traditional feedback (teacher-fronted presentation and practice of student errors).

Siekmann investigated peer scaffolding and learner orientation towards the task (why studying) during the completion of collaborative WebQuests. A WebQuest task can be created by the researcher to include authentic materials that can also follow the tenets of TBLT. Siekmann found that the learners self-scaffolded, scaffolded the partner and collectively scaffolded. Siekmann also found the type of dialogue did appear to be affected by learner orientation toward the task.

Research by Paula Krüger and Lena Heine looked at language and cognition in TBLT. Krüger discussed the cognitive processes involved when solving think-aloud tasks. Anglophones learning German were asked to complete problem-solving tasks while thinking aloud. Krüger used the think-alouds to further understand the cognitive processes that learners use when solving problems, but from the think-aloud data, she also suggested that our socio-cultural contexts affect how we learn a language.

Heine's research does not focus on foreign language learning processes, but the relationship between general and linguistic problem-solving during the processing of subject-specific tasks. She discussed the importance of analysing learner data from a general cognitive perspective, so we can further understand how language production expresses conceptual structure.

Task-based assessment is discussed by Helmut Johannes Vollmer and Jörg-U. Kessler. Vollmer investigated differences in performance on a geographical competence task of bilingual pupils taught in their second language with monolingual pupils taught in their L1, German. Vollmer suggested that, in both L1 and L2 subject-matter learning, the integration of content with language learning needs to be intensified.

Kessler proposed a method for teachers to diagnose their learners' inter-language development and, thus, use communicative tasks that are fine-tuned to individual learner needs, even in a classroom setting.

As this book was born of a conference session, it is mainly of interest to TBLT researchers. Nevertheless, Eckerth's Introduction provides an excellent summary of TBLT. He discusses definitions, past research, and present challenges in an accessible fashion that would provide new researchers/students of TBLT with sufficient knowledge to start tackling the vast TBLT literature.

Despite the limited potential audience, this book has successfully compiled high-quality research articles that are extremely important in developing our understanding of TBLT.
