

Ellis, R., Skehan, P., Li, A., Shintani, N., & Lambert, C. (2020). *Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.

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Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a prominent approach in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), attracting the interest of both researchers and language educators. TBLT has been researched from different theoretical perspectives and has evolved over the years. The result has meant different conceptualizations by different authors and researchers. To contribute to the discourse, Ellis et al., bring together the voices of leading scholars to paint an exhaustive and inclusive portrait of TBLT, taking into account multiple perspectives which – as the title suggests – offer insights on both theory and practice.

The volume is divided into five parts. Tracing the historical background of TBLT to its modern application, Part I: Chapter 1 introduces the fundamental concepts of TBLT which are further discussed in the volume's subsequent sections. Part II, expanding upon the theoretical foundations of TBLT, is comprised of five chapters, each of which explores a theoretical framework. Chapter 2 presents the cognitive-interactionist approaches, a theoretical perspective that has been closely associated with tasks. The authors discuss the interaction and output hypotheses while also highlighting corrective feedback as a way to promote L2 development and how tasks can serve as a vehicle of interaction. Approaching tasks from a psycholinguistic perspective, Chapter 3 focuses on task performance, an important research domain of TBLT, and presents the ways task performance has been traditionally measured by looking at complexity, accuracy, lexis, and fluency (CALF). Two influential models of task-based performance are presented, namely, the Limited Attention Capacity (LAC) model and the Stabilize, Simplify, Automatize, Restructure, Complexify (SSARC) model, the latter informed by Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis (CH). The authors highlight research that supports and challenges each model. Their discussion shows how they differ (e.g., attention resources, acquisition), but also how they complement each other (e.g., proficiency level, modality). Chapter 4 examines tasks from a sociocultural perspective, an approach that was not originally associated with TBLT and is relatively newer to SLA. The authors explore key constructs of the sociocultural perspective (i.e., scaffolding, languaging, activity theory, collaborative dialogue) and their relationship to TBLT scholarship. Acknowledging the dynamic relation between learners and tasks and how each task will not work exactly the same way with different learners, Chapter 5 tackles what has often been referred to in SLA as individual differences. The authors consider cognitive (i.e., language aptitude, working memory) and affective domains (i.e., motivation, and anxiety) and summarize research findings for each concept. They conclude that even though individual factors have a significant moderating impact on

learning, additional research is much needed. Chapter 6 takes on a broader approach by exploring educational perspectives that go beyond SLA, notably the concept of learning by doing put forth by Dewey at the beginning of the twentieth century. The chapter also addresses how learners' engagement and personal investment can impact task performance.

The three chapters in Part III address pedagogical perspectives. Chapter 7 explores the design of different task-based syllabi with a special focus on how tasks are selected and sequenced within a curriculum. Several models are presented, differing in terms of whether they are based on cognitive models, derived from needs analysis for specific purpose courses, or are for general second language education. Chapter 8 addresses the implementation of tasks. Leveraging the popular framework of the pre-task, task, and post-task stages, the authors explore various teaching options and discuss ways of integrating focus on form. They conclude their chapter by presenting two examples of tasks. In Chapter 9, the authors discuss assessment in TBLT. A broad explanation of assessment and testing with respect to task-based teaching is put forward while acknowledging the limited attention that assessment has received. The authors argue that efforts to bring change in teaching must be supported by complementary methods of assessment. Without this, teachers may revert to more traditional teaching that is more conducive to status quo assessment methods. The chapter concludes by presenting several initiatives in task-based assessment and how teachers can develop their own task-based assessments.

Part IV focusses on the investigation of task-based programs. Chapter 10 begins by exploring studies which have sought to analyze the efficacy of TBLT. Despite some methodological flaws highlighted by the authors in the research design of studies comparing TBLT to other teaching approaches, they conclude that the evidence is in favor of drawing on TBLT. Chapter 11 looks at the evaluation of TBLT from an educational perspective, taking the view of the teacher and evaluating TBLT from the vantage point of whether it "works" for them.

The final section of the volume, Part V, is outward looking and considers the future of TBLT. Within this section, Chapter 12 addresses some of the criticisms that TBLT has faced, addressing certain misconceptions associated to TBLT, such as the notions that there is no grammar in TBLT and that TBLT might not be possible in certain contexts, especially at the beginner level. Chapter 13 revisits key themes explored by the various authors and offers insight on the way forward for TBLT.

This volume is, in my humble opinion, the most thorough discussion currently available on the topic of Task-Based Language Teaching. While other publications have focused on specific issues or on specific conceptions of TBLT, this collaborative publication provides a holistic and nuanced portrait of TBLT. It is both supportive and critical of the approach. A key strength of this work is the way the authors explore the development of TBLT, which has been informed by theories and research from a broad perspective within SLA, while at the same time highlighting issues and challenges faced by

both researchers and teachers. In terms of applicability, the book strives to balance and bridge theory and practice, offering clear and concrete examples of tasks, task-based curricula, and how tasks can be used for assessment. Throughout, the authors remain open and honest about the need for further research and how research on task performance and task complexity may not easily translate into classroom practices. The book is very well-structured, with each part and chapter flowing into the next. Having taken a broad approach, it is accessible to both researchers and students wishing to gain more knowledge of the different approaches and to teachers wishing to gain a better understanding of how to incorporate tasks in the classroom.