

Task-based Teaching, Learning & Assessment: Promoting real-world tasks

التعليم والتعلم والتقييم القائم على المهام:
تعزيز المهام في العالم الحقيقي

*Dr. BOUADJAJ Sidi Mohammed Farouk**
Université Djillali Liabes
Sidi Bel-Abbès, (Algeria)
farouk.bouadjaj@univ-sba.dz

Dr. BELHADJ ABDELKRIM
Université Djillali Liabes
Sidi Bel-Abbès, (Algeria)
abdelkrim.belhadj@univ-sba.dz

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Abstract:

In this article the researchers try to investigate how Task-based Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TBLA) has emerged as a dynamic approach in language education, emphasizing the integration of real-world tasks to enhance English language acquisition. It explores the principles, advantages, and challenges of TBLA in the context of higher education English language learning. It explores the theoretical frameworks and basis of implementing task-based instruction and content, emphasizing on its effectiveness in enhancing learners' motivation, increase communication skills, favor learner autonomy, and language proficiency. The article also discusses innovative assessment strategies aligned with TBLA, focusing on performance-based evaluations that reflect authentic language use. By examining the practical implications and pedagogical implications of TBLA, it aims to provide insights for university teachers seeking to implement engaging and effective language teaching practices.

Keywords: TBLA, Language Learning, Assessment, Task-based Teaching

الملخص: يحاول الباحثون في هذه المقالة التحقيق في كيفية ظهور التدريس والتعلم والتقييم القائم على المهام (TBLA) كنهج ديناميكي في تعليم اللغة، مع التركيز على تكامل المهام في العالم الحقيقي لتعزيز اكتساب اللغة الإنجليزية. يستكشف مبادئ ومزايا وتحديات TBLA في سياق تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في التعليم العالي. يستكشف الأطر النظرية وأسس تنفيذ التعليم والمحتوى القائم على المهام، مع التركيز على فعاليته في تعزيز تحفيز المتعلمين، وزيادة مهارات الاتصال، وتفضيل استقلالية المتعلم، وإتقان اللغة.

* Dr. BOUADJAJ Sidi Mohammed Farouk

يناقش المقال أيضا استراتيجيات التقييم المبتكرة المتوافقة مع TBLA، مع التركيز على التقييمات القائمة على الأداء التي تعكس الاستخدام اللغوي الأصيل. من خلال دراسة الآثار العملية والآثار التربوية لـ TBLA، يهدف إلى تقديم رؤى لمعلمي الجامعات الذين يسعون إلى تنفيذ ممارسات تدريس اللغة الجذابة والفعالة. الكلمات المفتاحية: TBLA، تعلم اللغة، التقييم، التدريس القائم على المهام

1 Introduction

Task-based Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TBLA) represents a pedagogical approach that has gained significant attention in language education for its emphasis on real-world tasks and project-based learning. This methodology focuses on engaging learners in authentic, meaningful tasks that reflect situations they may face outside the classroom. By promoting real-world tasks, TBLA aims to enhance language acquisition by providing learners with opportunities to use language in practical contexts. Allwright and Bailey (1991) suggest that *“even if everything else seems favorable, learners can ‘switch off’ because they do not like the way content of their course is presented in the teaching materials”* (p.162). Through task-based activities, students are encouraged to communicate, collaborate, and problem-solve, fostering not only linguistic skills but also critical thinking and creativity. Assessment in TBLA is designed to evaluate learners' ability to apply language in authentic situations, moving away from traditional tests towards performance-based evaluations. This introduction explores the principles, benefits, and challenges of Task-based Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the context of language education, highlighting its potential to transform language learning into a dynamic experience.

2 Historical Background

Task-based Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TBLA) can be traced back to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) movement of the 1970s and 1980s. TBLA progressed from the perception that language learning need to focus on communicative competence and functional language use rather than just grammatical correctness. This approach emphasizes the importance of real-world tasks and project-based learning in language education. TBLA emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional teaching, shifting towards a notional syllabus that prioritizes language functions and content suitability. The early proposals for TBLA highlighted the significance of including tasks in language curricula to promote practical language use. This was the foundation stone for TBLA's

development, leading to innovative methodologies that integrate tasks, authentic language situations, and performance-based assessments to enhance language learning outcomes.

We can trace other former paths of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). It has its roots in communicative language teaching, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the traditional grammar-based approach. TBLT focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language, with assessment based on task outcome rather than grammar correctness. This approach is designed to develop target language fluency and student confidence, making it a popular method for communicative language teaching. The origins of TBLT can be traced back to the Bangalore Project, led by N.S. Prabhu in India during the 1980s. Prabhu observed that students could learn language just as easily with a non-linguistic problem as when they were focused on linguistic forms, leading him to adopt a task-based syllabus. This approach tapped into learners' natural mechanisms for second language acquisition and was not necessarily concerned with real-life situation. TBLT has since evolved and been influenced by various scholars and approaches in second language acquisition. Main focus addressed in TBLT include defining, classifying, and sequencing tasks into a syllabus, and building complete lessons around tasks.

The concept of 'task' has been defined by various experts in the field. Willis (1996) defines it as a goal-based activity involving the use of learners' existing language resources, leading to an outcome. Ellis (2003) defines a task as a work plan that involves pragmatic processing of language, using learners' existing language resources and attention to meaning, resulting in the completion of an outcome that can be assessed for its communicative function.

Related approaches to language teaching include Problem-based Learning (PBL), Content-based instruction (CBI), and Content and language integrated learning (CLIL). These approaches incorporate authentic materials and tasks to drive language instruction and teach both the subject and the language. Task-supported language teaching (TSLT) also incorporates tasks as a central part of the lesson but follows a different sequence and model.

3 Definition

Task-based Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TBLA) is a learner-centered and experiential approach to language teaching and learning that focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language. The construct of a task is broadly defined as a goal-based activity involving the use of learners' existing language

resources, leading to an outcome. TBLA is a formative assessment that emphasizes assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning, and it is a type of task-based language assessment (TBLA) that is primarily concerned with the appropriate completion of real-world tasks rather than linguistic accuracy. TBLA is derived from the fact that students or learners after learning grammar and vocabulary were not able to fluently use the language neither to achieve communicative competence. TBLA is based on the same underlying principles as task-based language teaching (TBLT), but it enlarges it from the learning-and-teaching domain to the testing domain. This means that assessments and testing focus not only on the correctness of results but also on using them as a means of learning.

4 Task-Based Language Teaching Vs Traditional Language Teaching

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a learner-centered and experiential approach to language teaching and learning that focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language, while traditional language teaching is often based on a grammar-translation approach that focuses on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and the translation of texts to mother tongues. TBLT emphasizes the development of communicative competence, which includes the ability to use language for real-world purposes, while traditional language teaching often focuses on the accurate production of language forms regardless of its practicability. TBLT is a formative assessment that emphasizes assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning, and it is a type of task-based language assessment (TBLA) that is primarily concerned with the appropriate completion of real-world tasks rather than linguistic accuracy. TBLT is based on the same underlying principles as task-based language teaching (TBLT), but it extends it from the learning-and-teaching domain to the testing one.

5 Bridging Theory and Practice for Enhanced Learning Outcomes

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a learner-centered and experiential approach to language teaching and learning that focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language. It is based on the premise that language learners can enhance their second language acquisition (SLA) through engagement in communicative tasks that compel them to use language for themselves. TBLT stands in contrast to more traditional approaches that focus on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and the translation of texts. TBLT emphasizes the development of communicative competence, which includes

the ability to use language for real-world purposes, and it is a formative assessment that emphasizes assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. TBLA is derived from the urgent need to fill the gap between language grammar and vocabulary learning and the requirements for language fluency and communicative competence. TBLA is based on the same underlying principles and concerns as task-based language teaching (TBLT), adding to it assessments and outcomes testing.

6 A Framework for Authentic Communication Skills Development

The framework for authentic communication skills development includes several significant components, including observing instead of evaluating, stating feelings, expressing needs, and making requests. It also involves practicing communication skills through conversation with peers, classmates and even instructors, which can be done through face-to-face interactions or using technological devices such as the phone, or communication applications such as Zoom, or Google Meet. The framework emphasizes the importance of practicing in a nonjudgmental atmosphere, particularly for individuals who may be hesitant to speak directly or fear judgment. Additionally, the framework emphasizes the importance of authentic communication in language learning, which can enhance the four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and provide exposure to linguistic and cultural differences. Authentic communication can also promote the implementation of intercultural communication and facilitate the development of foreign communicative competence. The framework also highlights the importance of active listening in authentic communication, which can improve connections with people and build stronger relationships in a virtual world as well as in the real world.

7 Strategies for Effective Evaluation

Task-based Language Assessment (TBLA) is an approach to language assessment that focuses on what learners can do with language in real-world tasks, rather than what they exclusively know about language. TBLA is based on the use of authentic tasks, which provide authentic and contextually relevant information about the language development or performance of a student. It is a crucial element within task-based language teaching (TBLT), where tasks are essential pedagogic constructs that drive classroom activity. TBLA is primarily concerned with the appropriate completion of real-world tasks, rather than linguistic accuracy. TBLA faces challenges in terms of reliability, content validity, and authenticity,

which require the implementation of wide range of variables of language and content natures. The performances on tasks provide a teacher or a test user with authentic and contextually relevant information about the (second) language development or language performance of a student. It would extend the test to factual situations rather than only hypothetical ones

8 TBLA in the Algerian context

As far as the Algerian context is concerned Illustrations for Algerian students can be recommended and found in various sources such as stock photography websites like *Alamy*, *Getty Images*, and *Freepik*. These platforms offer a wide range of images depicting Algerian students engaged in educational activities, studying, interacting with teachers, and participating in school events. Additionally, educational materials like books, magazines, and online resources may contain illustrations specifically designed to represent Algerian students in diverse learning environments. Furthermore, local publications, educational websites, and cultural resources in Algeria may feature illustrations showcasing the academic life and experiences of Algerian students in schools, universities, and other educational settings.

Traditional Algerian illustrations often depict themes of history, memory, identity, cultural heritage, and authenticity, reflecting the country's rich cultural heritage and diverse influences. These themes are often explored through locally inspired art forms, including traditional clothing, architecture, and landscapes. Algerian painters have been pioneers of modernism, incorporating traditional Algerian themes and aesthetics into their work. The quest for an authentic iconography and identity has been a central theme in Algerian art, influenced by the country's political culture. Traditional clothing, such as the *haik* and *burnous*, are often featured in Algerian art, reflecting the country's diverse cultural influences and heritage. In the same path of Algerian artists teachers can cope with the students' needs for an immersive experience in the real life of students or learners in general. These were literal illustrations, in the same way, the corpus and curricula contents need to reflect the Algerian culture and real-life situations, incorporating national and regional cultures from Berber, Mozabit, Shawi, and Touareg, to Arabo-Muslim ones. In this case, students and learners in general would feel in total harmony with the content and language instruction.

9 Challenges in the Higher Education Context

In the context of higher education English language learning, TBLA faces several challenges. First, TBLA requires a significant number of resources, including trained raters,

time for scoring, and technology for recording and transcribing spoken language. These resources may not be available in all educational institutions. Second, TBLA may not be well-suited to all types of language tasks or contexts. For example, tasks that require specialized vocabulary or knowledge may be difficult to assess using TBLA, as may tasks that involve non-verbal communication or cultural knowledge. Third, TBLA may not provide a complete picture of language proficiency, particularly for students who have strong skills in some areas but weaknesses in others. For example, a student who is proficient in speaking and listening but has problems with writing may not perform well on a TBLA task that requires written responses. Fourth, TBLA may be subject to bias or inconsistency in scoring, particularly if raters are not well-trained or if there is a lack of clear scoring criteria though this is the main issue of assessments in general and not only in this particular context. This can lead to unreliable or invalid results, which may not accurately reflect students' language abilities. Finally, TBLA may not be well-understood or accepted by all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and administrators. This can lead not only to resistance or lack of engagement and motivation but to negatively impact the effectiveness of TBLA.

10 Enhancing Language Learning Through TBLA

Task-based Language Assessment (TBLA) is an effective approach to enhance learners' motivation, increase communication skills, favor learner autonomy, and improve language proficiency. The following points outline the effectiveness of TBLA in these areas:

- a) **Motivation:** TBLA can enhance learners' motivation by providing authentic and meaningful tasks that allow them to use language in a real-world context. This approach can increase learners' interest and engagement in the learning process, leading to higher levels of motivation
- b) **Communication Skills:** TBLA can increase communication skills by focusing on the ability to perform tasks in a target language, rather than on traditional language skills such as grammar or vocabulary. This approach allows learners to develop their communicative competence, which is essential for effective communication in real-world situations
- c) **Learner Autonomy:** TBLA can favor learner autonomy by providing learners with opportunities to take control of their learning process. This approach allows learners to make decisions about how to complete tasks, which can increase their confidence and freedom in learning

- d) Language Proficiency:** TBLA can improve language proficiency by providing learners with opportunities to use language in a real-world context. This approach allows learners to develop their language skills in a more authentic and meaningful way, leading to higher levels of proficiency

In summary, TBLA is an effective approach to enhance learners' motivation, increase communication skills, favor learner autonomy, and improve language proficiency. By providing authentic and meaningful tasks, TBLA allows learners to develop their communicative competence and language skills in a more authentic and meaningful way, leading to higher levels of proficiency.

11 Real-world Tasks in Language Teaching

To engage students through practical applications using real-world tasks in language teaching, the following strategies can be implemented:

- a) Authentic Learning:** Real-life contexts provide practical, relevant language usage that mirrors everyday communication scenarios, enhancing learners' practical language application
- b) Cultural Understanding:** Immersing learners in real-life contexts fosters cultural understanding, promoting deeper language comprehension and appreciation
- c) Motivation and Engagement:** Connecting language learning to real-world situations increase learner interest, motivation, and retention by demonstrating the immediate and tangible value of language skills
- d) Interactive Classroom:** Using the Direct Method, which emphasizes the use of the target language in the classroom, focusing on oral communication and immersion, can effectively capture students' attention, foster active participation, and enhance their language skills
- e) Incorporating Real-Life Situations:** By incorporating real-life situations, teachers can create dynamic and engaging lessons that accommodate to different learning styles, keep students motivated and interested throughout the lesson, and provide teachers with immediate feedback on students' language proficiency
- f) Encouraging Spontaneous Conversations:** Like using the Direct Method which encourages students to speak and interact in the target language from day one, which

not only builds their confidence but also helps them develop fluency and accuracy in speaking

- g) Using Visuals and Contextual Clues:** It is recommended to use visuals and contextual clues to help students understand and communicate in the target language, making learning more relevant and accessible
- h) Engaging Activities for Concept Reinforcement:** Interactive tools and engaging activities can help reinforce concepts and provide opportunities for students to practice their language skills in meaningful and relevant ways
- i) Effective Strategies for Monitoring Student Performance:** We can provide teachers with effective strategies for monitoring student performance, enabling them to address any gaps or misconceptions
- j) Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA):** In TBLA, real-world tasks should be used as devices to elicit and evaluate learners' communicative performance in the context of meaning-focused interaction, providing authentic and meaningful assessment of language proficiency

By implementing these strategies, language teachers can create engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences that foster learner autonomy, motivation, and language proficiency.

12 Promoting Language Proficiency

To promote language proficiency through Task-based Learning and Assessment (TBLA), educators can implement the following strategies and consider best practices and challenges:

a) Strategies to Promote Language Proficiency:

- **Authentic Tasks:** Design tasks that mirror real-life communication scenarios to enhance practical language application and proficiency
- **Cultural Context:** Incorporate cultural elements in tasks to foster deeper language comprehension and appreciation, improving overall language proficiency
- **Motivation:** Connect language learning to real-world situations to awaken learner interest, motivation, and retention, demonstrating the value of language skills in practical contexts
- **Interactive Learning:** Encourage interaction and collaboration among students during tasks to enhance communicative competence and language proficiency

- **Feedback and Reflection:** Provide constructive feedback and opportunities for reflection to help students improve their language skills and monitor their progress effectively

b) Best Practices:

- **Task Relevance:** Ensure tasks are personally relevant, culturally appropriate, and communicative to engage students effectively and enhance language proficiency
- **Authentic Materials:** Use authentic materials in tasks to expose students to real-life language usage and promote meaningful learning experiences
- **Goal-Oriented Tasks:** Design tasks that have clear goals to focus students on language use and effective communication, leading to improved proficiency
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Tailor tasks to students' proficiency levels and learning styles to provide effective language practice and promote proficiency growth

c) Challenges:

- **Resource Intensive:** Implementing TBLA effectively requires significant resources, including trained educators, time for task design, and technology for assessment, which can pose challenges in some educational settings
- **Task Design Complexity:** Designing tasks that are both engaging and linguistically challenging while aligning with learning objectives can be a challenge for teachers
- **Assessment Validity:** Ensuring the validity and reliability of assessments in TBLA to accurately measure language proficiency can be a challenge, requiring careful planning and evaluation.

By incorporating these strategies, best practices, and addressing challenges, educators can effectively promote language proficiency through Task-based Learning and Assessment, providing students with meaningful and engaging language learning experiences that enhance their communicative competence and overall language skills.

13 Conclusion

After analyzing the research on Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA), it is possible to draw several conclusions starting with the maturation of TBL Literature the research indicates that the TBL literature has reached a significant maturation point, with rigorous testing and study focusing on various aspects of TBL, including educational outcomes,

implementation strategies, and assessment methods. Positive educational outcomes, as early evidence suggests positive educational outcomes in terms of knowledge acquisition, participation, engagement, and team collaboration through the implementation of TBL. The core Elements of TBL such as team formation, immediate feedback, in-class sequence, incentive structure, and peer review, to ensure effective implementation and assessment of TBL activities. As far as the challenges and practices are concerned it shows promise in enhancing language proficiency and promoting communicative competence, challenges such as resource intensity, task design complexity, and assessment validity need to be addressed. i.e., task relevance, authentic materials, goal-oriented tasks, and differentiated instruction to optimize TBL outcomes. Concerning teacher beliefs beginner-level learners, highlight the need for building teacher autonomy and supporting successful implementation of TBL principles in diverse EFL contexts. Being more than considerable its usage directs attention on language as a tool for communication, integrates learning and assessment, provides diagnostic feedback, and examines multiple aspects of language ability through authentic tasks, triggering educators to reconsider teaching and learning approaches. Despite its benefits, challenges are also to be cited, they include task selection, replication of authentic context, assessment of task performance, and generalization of task performance to real-life situations, emphasizing the need for further research and development in this assessment approach. In conclusion, the research on TBLA highlights its potential to enhance language learning outcomes, promote communicative competence, and provide valuable insights into effective teaching and assessment practices. Addressing challenges and implementing best practices can further optimize the benefits of TBLA in language education. The must in foreign language learning and teaching is that the students live an immersive experience where their senses are in a total ebullition for the sake of coping with real-life situations for the sake of learning.

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