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978-1-108-49138-9 — The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching
Edited by Mohammad Javad Ahmadian , Michael H. Long
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The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an innovative approach to language teaching which emphasises the importance of engaging learners' natural abilities for acquiring language incidentally. The speed with which the field is expanding makes it difficult to keep up with recent developments, for novices and experienced researchers alike. This Handbook meets that need, providing a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of the field, written by a stellar line-up of leading international experts. Chapters are divided into eight thematic areas, and as well as covering theory, also contain case studies to show how TBLT can be implemented in practice, in a range of global contexts, as well as questions for discussion, and suggested further reading. Comprehensive in its coverage, and written in an accessible style, it will appeal to a wide readership, not only researchers and graduate students, but also classroom teachers working in a variety of educational and cultural contexts around the world.

MOHAMMAD J. AHMADIAN is currently Head of Postgraduate Taught at the School of Education, University of Leeds. He has published widely on task-based language teaching and second-language acquisition. Recent publications include *Recent Perspectives on Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning* (co-editor, 2018).

MICHAEL H. LONG was Professor of Second Language Acquisition at University of Maryland, College Park. He was the author of well over 100 articles and book chapters. In 2017, he received a lifetime achievement award from the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching.

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As the full manuscript of *The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching* was submitted to Cambridge University Press, Professor Mike Long, co-editor of this volume and a pioneer of task-based language teaching, passed away after a brave battle with cancer. Enumerating the many contributions of Mike Long to applied linguistics, language education, and second language acquisition cannot possibly do him justice in a short piece like this. He had been professor in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Maryland since 2003. Previously he had held appointments at the University of Hawai'i and the University of Pennsylvania. He published widely in applied linguistics generally, but perhaps is most well-known for his work in second language acquisition. He is the author of the highly influential Interaction Hypothesis, a theoretical framework that has stimulated a huge volume of research, advancing both second language theory-building and practice. He also made leading contributions to our understanding of age effects in second language acquisition, and to needs analysis.

His contributions to task-based learning and teaching are immense. Mike was an inaugural recipient of the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching's Distinguished Achievement Award. He has had a profound impact on the development of TBLT both as an area of enquiry, with high empirical standards, and also as an established pedagogical framework in many parts of the world. His impact on the field of TBLT lives on, through his writings, through his personal relationships with many researchers in the field (including the contributors to this book), and through the continuing achievements of his many Master's and doctoral students.

Mike's memorial webpage can be found at: https://iatblt.wixsite.com/mikelong.

Mohammad J. Ahmadian
Leeds May 2021

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Ilaria Borro is about to complete her PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Portsmouth. She is a member of GRAAL, a research group whose main interest is in TBLT experimental research and language teachers training. She carried out and published experimental studies about corrective feedback and TBLT.

Lara Bryfonski is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Georgetown University where she conducts research on second language acquisition and TBLT, specifically: training task-based teachers, corrective feedback, materials development, language learning in study abroad, and methods for second language research.

Zhanting Bu is Associate Professor of English Linguistics at Qingdao University in Shandong, China. He specializes in systemic functional linguistics and applied linguistics. He conducts research on academic and journalism discourses, with a focus on evaluative language using a corpus linguistics approach, to include appraisal theory.

Martin Bygate has been involved with TBLT throughout his career. A recipient of the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching's Distinguished Achievement Award and a former co-editor of the journal *Applied Linguistics* and the John Benjamins TBLT series, he

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has published and edited widely. He is an emeritus professor at Lancaster University, UK, and now lives in France.

Hao Chen is a lecturer of Spanish at the School of Foreign Languages at Qingdao University in Shandong, China. She conducts research on Spanish language teaching and on Latin American literature. She has published translations of works by Alejo Carpentier, Che Guevara, Jordi Llobregat, Eduardo Zalamea Borda, and Javier Cercas.

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John McE. Davis is a research scientist in the Center for English Language Learning and Assessment at Educational Testing Service (ETS). He holds a PhD in Second Language Studies from the University of Hawai'i and conducts research and product development projects in language pedagogy, teacher training, and program evaluation.

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Preface
The Origins and Growth of Task-Based Language Teaching

Michael H. Long and Mohammad J. Ahmadian

The use of various kinds of tasks to promote language development is the core component in an innovative approach to foreign and second language learning, task-based language teaching (TBLT), the focus of this volume. Tasks also occupy a central role in a thriving area of investigation in the field of second language acquisition. TBLT and second language acquisition enjoy a symbiotic relationship.

Task-based language teaching was first proposed in the 1980s and 1990s (Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992, 1993; Nunan, 1989; Robinson, 1994, 1998; Skehan, 1996). Its early advocacy was initially ignored or, in some quarters, greeted with a mixture of skepticism and outright hostility, notably from textbook writers and armchair pedagogues. Criticisms continue to this day, although they tend to be more measured now. Some are rational, constructive, and serve to motivate new research and improvements to classroom practice. Others clearly reflect misunderstandings or thinly disguised commercial agendas – even though TBLT is no panacea. (For detailed deconstructions and responses, see, for example, R. Ellis [2009], Long [2016], Robinson [1994], Skehan [2002].)

After the slow start, interest in the use of tasks, both in TBLT and second language acquisition, has grown steadily over the past twenty years. This is apparent in the increasing numbers of monographs, edited volumes, articles, and special issues of major second language acquisition and language-teaching journals devoted to TBLT, as well as the creation in 2009 of a TBLT book series, published by John Benjamins. Under the stewardship of Kris Van den Branden, Martin Bygate, and John Norris, the International Association for TBLT (iatblt.org) was formed in 2005, and has held eight biannual international conferences: Leuven (2005), Hawai'i (2007), Lancaster (2009), Auckland (2011), Alberta (2013), Leuven (2015), Barcelona (2019), and Ottawa (2019). The ninth is scheduled for Innsbruck in 2022. The

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IATBLT also recently launched a new journal: *TASK – Journal on Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning*.

Why the Interest?

There are at least five reasons for the growing interest in TBLT:

1. Adult learners perceive the relevance of courses that have obviously been designed to meet their real-world second language (L2) needs, not those of someone else or of no-one in particular – courses through which they can acquire a *functional command* of the L2, not merely learn *about* it.
2. Evaluations consistently show that students and teachers prefer task-based to grammar-based courses. Adult and school-age learners, alike, find working on communicative pedagogic tasks more interesting, enjoyable and motivating, and teachers respond to their students' enthusiasm. Traditional grammar-based lessons, conversely, tend to become monotonous, with no apparent purpose other than to introduce the "structure of the day" (whether or not the students concerned are developmentally ready for it), and then to practice it on the altar of "automatization," as if second language acquisition were a matter of acquiring a new set of language habits.
3. Numerous studies of various aspects of task-based language learning and teaching have appeared in books and refereed journals – far more research in forty years than on all other approaches to language teaching combined. Comparative studies at the program level consistently find that students not only prefer task-based courses, but also learn more from them (Bryfonski & Mackay, 2017). It has often been observed that TBLT is the closest the field has ever had to a researched pedagogy.
4. With its focus on incidental and implicit language learning while doing tasks, not just explicit language learning, TBLT lends itself to situations where syllabus content has to give priority, or at least equal billing, to something other than language. Such is the case with immersion, bilingual education, content-and-language-integrated learning (CLIL), and tertiary-level English medium instruction (EMI) programs, among others. It is no accident that some early adopters have included programs within economically and politically powerful countries or regions whose languages – Japanese, Korean, German, Flemish, Cantonese, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Finnish, Catalan, Basque, Polish, Urdu, Persian, etc. – have limited numbers of speakers beyond their own borders, so where the L2 is taught as an important subject or even used as a medium of instruction. Others have been government agencies, educational institutions, and occupational and vocational training programs – for groups as varied as physicians, diplomats, airline

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personnel, journalists, nurses, military linguists, and tourism industry workers – in which functional L2 abilities are recognized as important. In all these cases, L2 learning and teaching are taken seriously, and TBLT is recognized as a viable option.

5. The underlying principles of TBLT are in general alignment with the results of over four decades of theory and research on second language acquisition inside and outside classrooms, which, after all, is the process language teaching is designed to facilitate. The same research findings, conversely, are not at all consistent with attempts to impose a generic, pre-set, grammatical syllabus on students, with no regard for their developmental stage, for individual differences, or for why they are learning the L2. The second language acquisition research findings are also inconsistent with the way a grammatical syllabus is typically delivered: via present – practice – produce (PPP).

If Task-Based Language Teaching Is So Good, Why Isn't It More Widely Used?

Despite the increased interest, scholarly research and writing, and successful implementation in many programs around the world, task-based course design has had less impact on what goes on in classrooms than might have been expected by now. Most language teaching continues to be based on coursebooks that adhere to a grammatical syllabus and PPP. If TBLT is really such an improvement, why should that be?

There are several reasons, six of which are listed below:

1. A major factor is the multi-billion dollar publishing industry's stranglehold on language teaching. Its most lucrative product is the coursebook, and even more lucrative, the coursebook series, whose destructive impact on any kind of communicative language teaching, not just TBLT, has long been pointed out, most perceptively by Geoffrey Jordan in journal articles (e.g., Jordan, 2019; Jordan and Gray, 2019) and in the archives of his insightful and amusing blog, *What do you think you're doing?* (https://applingtesol.wordpress.com/author/duffyjordan/). Publishers spend large amounts of money on advertising, conference sponsorships, and wining and dining people who make decisions about textbook adoptions. Perhaps this should not be surprising. Vast profits are made from harmful products in many walks of life (nuclear weapons, armaments, fossil fuels, opioids, animal products, etc.), and albeit on a smaller scale, language teaching is no exception.
2. Millions of language teachers lack adequate training (in many cases, *any* training), a problem often compounded by an inadequate command of the language they are teaching. Coursebooks are attractive to such teachers and the school systems that employ them because they

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