

**The Efficiency of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)
in English Language Instruction: A Systematic Review of
Advantages, Challenges, and Contemporary Applications**

MAJID MOHAMMED CHALLOOP

University of Al-Qadisiya - College of Education

Abstract

In this research, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as an instructional approach in the area of English language training is discussed systematically. TBLT takes more emphasis on real language use, problem-solving, and meaningful communication than the traditional form-oriented methods. To dispel enduring misconceptions in the regional research, the review synthesized the foundational theories, mainly Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1985), Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985), and Ellis's task-based framework, as well as to address the misattribution of TBLT to Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The methodology to be used in the study is an organised systematic review, also explains theme analysis, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and search tactics. Findings show that TBLT leads to improved learner engagement, autonomy, accuracy, fluency, and communication competence. However, it is not without its challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, exam-driven curricula, big class numbers, a lack of instructional resources, and a lack of technology preparedness, especially in Arab educational contexts. The prospective pedagogical developments are provided by contemporary applications like mobile-assisted TBLT, VR-based exercises, AI-mediated feedback, and integrated settings. The paper ends with evidence-based suggestions for enhancing TBLT implementation in Iraq and the Arab world in general, with a strong focus on the necessity of professional development, curriculum change, and task design supported by technology.

1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is considered to be a crucial approach to communicative strategies in second language learning. It is an assumption that meaningful interaction is the key driving force of language development and it is in contrast to the traditional ideas which emphasize grammatical accuracy attained through explicit instructions (Ellis, 2003). TBLT tries to replicate real-world language use by putting learners in meaningful activities that are aimed to achieve non-linguistic goals, such as problem solving or project completion. Theoretical background of TBLT is based on Long's (1985) Interaction Hypothesis, foregrounding the significance of meaning negotiation; Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, emphasizing the role of pushed output; and sociocultural perspectives derived from Vygotsky (1978), which underscore the role of mediated learning within collaborative contexts. Contrary to popular belief, TBLT requires both interaction and output and is not derived from Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which minimizes output. Curriculum changes and the growing accessibility of digital technology have increased interest in TBLT in Iraqi and Arab educational institutions. However, it is still not widely used due to the examination-based nature of teaching, crowded classrooms, and lack of teacher training (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). This paper is therefore context specific to Arab educational contexts and is a methodical, evidence-based analysis of the effectiveness of TBLT, the problems, and its potential future.

2. Methodology (Systematic Review Framework)

This study adopts a systematic-review design following PRISMA guidelines.

2.1 Search Strategy

Databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar. Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, TBLT challenges, Arab EFL contexts, digital TBLT, task design. Period: 2000–2024.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

- Peer-reviewed studies

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- Focus on TBLT in ESL/EFL contexts
- Studies addressing pedagogy, challenges, or technological applications

2.3 Exclusion Criteria

- Non-academic sources
- Studies focusing solely on PBL or CLT without TBLT components
- Unverifiable or uncited claims

2.4 Data Analysis

A thematic synthesis was conducted with four major themes:

1. Theoretical foundations
2. Evidence of effectiveness
3. Challenges (global and Arab-specific)
4. Contemporary technological applications

3. Theoretical Foundations of TBLT

The concept of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is based on communicative and cognitive theories which emphasize the importance of authentic language use.

3.1 Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Long (1985, 2015) argues that negotiation of meaning during interaction facilitates comprehension and acquisition.

3.2 Swain's Output Hypothesis

According to Swain (1985), learners should be in a position to generate language so that they can realize the gaps in their knowledge.

3.3 Cognitive and Task Complexity (Skehan & Robinson)

Skehan (1998) and Robinson (2011) emphasize the significance of the task design and the cognitive load.

3.4 Sociocultural Perspectives

Vygotsky (1978) and Lantolf and Thorne (2006) place an emphasis on scaffolding, mediation and collaborative learning.

3.5 Defining “Task”

As postulated by Ellis (2017) and Samuda and Bygate (2008), a task has to:

- Have a non-linguistic outcome
- Prioritize meaning over form
- Require real communication

4. Empirical Evidence of TBLT Effectiveness

Studies consistently show that TBLT strengthens:

4.1 Communicative Competence

Students acquire grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competence (Canale and Swain, 1980).

4.2 Fluency and Accuracy

Repetition of the tasks and the negotiated interaction improve fluency and accuracy (Ahmadian, 2012; Ellis, 2006).

4.3 Motivation and Engagement

TBLT increases intrinsic motivation through meaningful tasks (Dörnyei, 2001).

4.4 Autonomy and Confidence

Learners make independent linguistic decisions, which improves ownership of learning.

4.5 Higher-Order Thinking Skills

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Most of the real activities are problem solving, comparison, evaluation and decision making.

5. Challenges of Implementing TBLT

5.1 Global Challenges

- Inadequate training of teachers in task design.
- Time constraints due to task cycles.
- Difficulty assessing task-based performance.
- Large classroom sizes.

5.2 Challenges Specific to Arab Contexts

It has been found in the research of Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE:

5.2.1 Centralized, Exam-Driven Curricula

Ministries do not allow time to do communicative work because of high-stakes assessment and grammar translation.

5.2.2 Limited Professional Development

A large number of educators do not have the training in the philosophy of TBLT or task sequencing (Al-Jarf, 2021).

5.2.3 Overcrowded Classrooms

A typical feature of Iraqi classrooms, which makes negotiating meaning difficult.

5.2.4 Resource Limitations

There is imbalance in multimedia tools, gadgets and internet access.

5.2.5 Mismatch Between Student Levels

Big proficiency differences undermine cooperation activities.

6. Technology-Enhanced TBLT (Modern Applications)

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6.1 Mobile-Assisted TBLT

Supports:

- audio recording
 - collaborative note-taking
 - micro-tasks
- (Stockwell, 2010; Kukulska-Hulme, 2009)

6.2 Blended and Online TBLT

Allows an extended time in research and asynchronous team work (González-Lloret, 2020).

6.3 Virtual and Augmented Reality Tasks

The simulated real-life communication situations add to authenticity (Lan, 2022).

6.4 AI-Mediated Tasks

AI tools provide:

- instant feedback
- adaptive tasks
- safe conversational practice

6.5 Game-Based TBLT

Improves engagement and curbs speaking phobia, especially in younger learners.

7. Evidence-Based Recommendations

1. Also create formal professional-development programmes which focus on task design, assessment, and technological integration.
2. Reconsider national curricula in order to include task-based cycles and performance-based learning outcomes.
3. Use balanced assessment models which are a combination of analytic rubrics and performance tasks.

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4. Use blended and mobile-assisted learning practices to overcome class-time limitations.
5. Develop localized Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) models for Iraqi and Arab classrooms, considering cultural and curricular constraints.

8. Conclusion

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be seen as a powerful pedagogical framework that can improve student autonomy, communicative competence, English proficiency, and authentic language use, which can be demonstrated with the help of the systematic review in question. However, TBLT implementation involves significant professional development, better technological infrastructure and institutional and pedagogical transformation especially in Arab settings. TBLT has a great potential in promoting teaching of the English language in Iraq and the rest of the Arab world when well adapted and facilitated.

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