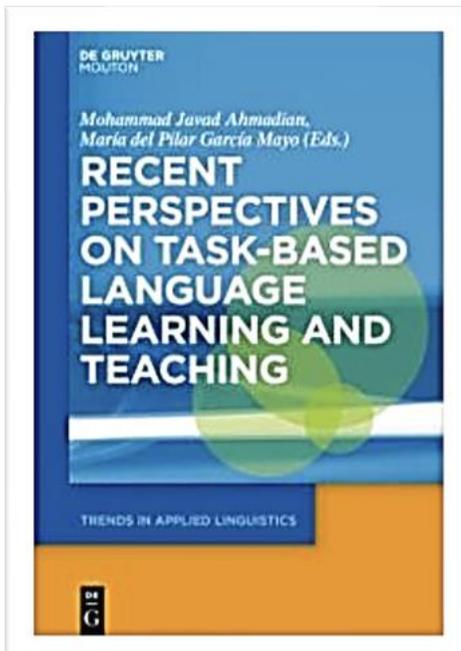




Recent Perspectives on Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching

Ahmadian, M. J., & García Mayo, M. D. P. (Eds) (2018). De Gruyter Mouton. ISBN: 978-1501511479

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The book, *Recent Perspectives on Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*, edited by Mohammad Javad Ahmadian and María del Pilar García Mayo, may prove a useful tool for experienced and novice Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) researchers. The book is divided into 12 chapters and discusses the most recent trends in TBLT.

First, the foreword section, written by Ali Shehadeh, is a discussion about the importance of TBLT. This section mentions the relevance of TBLT in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). It covers three main themes: TBLT in foreign contexts, TBLT and second

language (L 2) writing, and TBLT and technology. He advocates that, TBLT is shifting from second language contexts to foreign language contexts.

The introduction section of the book is written by Ahmadian and García Mayo. They postulate that their inspiration to write the book was to assimilate the epistemological multiplicity of TBLT and SLA by combining different theoretical perspectives. As a result, the book is divided into four major sections covering these four perceptions and their relevant theoretical and empirical foundations.

All four sections have three chapters each. Section 1 is dedicated to the cognitive-interactionist theory as a theoretical framework for TBLT research which demands interaction through pair and small groups. However, the authors point to the gaps that exist in this perspective. TBLT studies related to sociocultural theory and complexity theory are covered respectively in Sections 2 and 3. As claimed by the authors, these two perspectives have opened up new avenues of research in the field of SLA; however, studies from such perspectives are few in TBLT. Section 4 reflects on the pedagogical perspectives to TBLT research. In this section the reader learns that due to the context-sensitivity of both TBLT in general and tasks in particular, studies in different parts of the world may harvest different results.

Section 1, Chapter 1, contains a recent empirical study by prominent scholars, García Mayo, Agirre, and Azkarai. The study is on cognitive-interactionist theory, which investigates two types of task repetition; same task repetition and procedural repetition, influence complexity, accuracy, and fluency in reference to oral production which was tested with young Spanish EFL learners. The findings reveal, procedural task repetition positively impacted the participants' fluency and accuracy. Additionally, it is indicated that task completion in itself can contribute to measures of fluency and accuracy.

Chapter 2 is written by Wen. Here, the author integrates research on formulaic sequences in SLA and cognitive aptitude factors of Working Memory (WM) into L2 task planning and performance. The results of his study, shows the importance of fixed phrases (formulaic sequences) in task performance, he proposes that formulaic sequences have the potential to be integrated into the traditional variables of complexity, accuracy, fluency, and lexis as measures of task performance. Moreover, Wen argues that apart from learning vocabulary and grammar, it would be beneficial for the learners to be taught phrasal knowledge too.

Chapter 3 contains a study by Gurzynski-Weiss, Henderson, and Jung which explores the timing and type of learner modified output in

relation to correct perception of feedback in face-to-face and synchronous task-based chat. The findings revealed, learners' immediate output modification strongly correlates with their correct noticing of feedback. In other words, when learners are required to produce immediate partial modified output, they would be more likely to notice feedback, as compared to when they are not required to produce modified output. Interestingly, the relationship between immediate production of modified output and noticing of feedback was more robust in chat rather than face-to-face interactions.

Section 2 (chapters 4 through 6) is designated to sociocultural theory. In chapter 4, Ahmadian and Garcia Mayo contend that tasks require learners to resort to their cognitive and linguistic resources for the sake of mediation, appropriation, and internalization—a belief that elucidates the link between sociocultural theory and TBLT. Chapter 5 outlines the effects of L3 learner proficiency and task types on language mediation. Williams investigates the adoption of Content Based Instruction (CBI) into a TBLT framework in the context of a French curriculum. According to him, CBI can inform and augment TBLT by offering opportunities for the stages in tasks which lack language focus or focus on linguistic elements, particularly in difficult grammatical points or sociolinguistic/pragmatic aspects of language; this focus on language elements, while performing a task, can be directed by a feature typical of CBI (e.g., verbalization).

Chapters 7, 8, 9 fall under section 3. Here the authors draw on the complexity theory framework. By defining tasks as fertile grounds for the integration of social, cognitive, and professional aspects of second/foreign language learning, Bygate (chapter 7) argues, tasks are excellent contexts for the development of learner autonomy. Larsen-freeman and Nguyen (chapter 8), bring into light L2 learners' inter-individual and intra-individual variations of performance on the acquisition of 30 English formulaic sequences by using tasks in the context of the classroom. While Wen's study in Chapter 2 show the significance of formulaic sequences in task performance, the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest of this study done by Larsen-freeman and Nguyen demonstrated that TBLT is not only useful for teaching grammatical and lexical features, but also for teaching formulaic sequences. By looking at TBLT from an ecological viewpoint in Chapter 9, Kramsch and Narcy-Combes suggest, empathy has to be incorporated into TBLT.

Section 4 (chapter 10) delves into TBLT from a pedagogical and educational perspective. For example, East pinpoints the relationship between tasks and explicit grammar teaching by comparing the strong form of TBLT, which is a 'zero grammar' approach, with weaker versions of

TBLT, describing focus on form, and focus on meaning. Due to teachers' lack of understanding with tasks, Müller-Hartmann and Schocker (chapter 11) argue that long-term teacher training programs that promote teachers' reflective ability are more facilitative than one-shot in-service training sessions that focus on theoretical input. Finally, Newton and Bui (chapter 12) conducted a Vietnamese study in which the researchers evaluated the principles of a newly developed curriculum against the established principles of TBLT.

This book can be of great use for the teachers who are interested applying TBLT in their teaching practice. Yet, we can't deny the fact that we are living in the era of science and technology and the teaching modes have been changing from face-to-face to distance and online teaching which was not covered in this text.

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