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**Book review:**  
**Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching**  
**written by Long, 2015**

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A thorough description and analysis of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles is what language teachers and researchers are going to find in this complete and well developed volume. Written by Mike Long, an experienced scholar and professor in the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the book, entitled *Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*, is aimed at a more knowledgeable audience in the area since it deals simultaneously with in-depth constructs and basic definitions from the field. A critical, thought-provoking approach is brought by author who offers the readers not only theoretical evidence surrounding TBLT but, additionally, several examples from different classroom practices and contexts that serve as informative illustrations for the reader.

Organized into 12 Chapters, Long's piece has as its main goals to offer a rational argument for a particular way to do task-based teaching grounded in theory and classroom practice. Moreover, the author brings "a step-by-step description of how to implement TBLT for those interested in doing so" (p. xii). As posed by Long, his main interest with this book is "to show the linkage between theory and research findings in SLA, the process LT is designed to facilitate and TBLT" (p. xii). In order to achieve such purposes, the volume is divided into three parts namely: 1) Theory and Research, in which the author discusses psycholinguistic and philosophical underpinnings of the SLA and TBLT fields within four chapters; 2) Design and Implementation, where seven chapters attempt to detail the main principles of TBLT as well as offer relevant information about syllabus and materials design/implementation; 3) The Road Ahead,

the last chapter that seeks to point some possible directions for the future of TBLT research and practice.

In chapter 1, entitled ‘Why TBLT’, Long elucidates the difference between TBLT in his book and other approaches with the same name but somewhat different characteristics. The author refers to these other approaches as “lower case ‘task-based’, that is, task-supported approaches” (p. 7) which, according to him, may have merits “but, as should be obvious, are not genuinely task-based” (p. 7). The author goes on presenting a rationale for genuine TBLT which, as he poses, is consistent with SLA theory and research findings, has its philosophical roots grounded in *l’education integrale*, accounts for what promises to deliver, offers a relevant and functional material implementation, employs an analytic (task) syllabus with *focus on form* to deal with problematic linguistic features, and is centered on the learner. Long concludes this first chapter stating that “given the importance of language learning to so many, it is essential that an approach to LT meets certain minimum standards” (p. 14). Therefore, the next chapters, as he explains, “attempt to show how TBLT measures up against all seven criteria” (p. 14).

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus on detailing theoretical foundations of TBLT. Chapter 2 – *SLA and the Fundamental LT Divide* presents a critical and systematic description of synthetic and analytic approaches to LT as well as their differences. Long explains that “‘synthetic’ and ‘analytic’ refer to the learner’s presumed role in the learning process” (p. 19). A synthetic approach, as he says, “begins by focusing on the *language* to be taught” (p. 19) while the analytic approach “starts with the *learner* and learning processes” (p. 20). The author then brings the main problems with synthetic approaches and focus on forms together with the main problems with analytic approaches and focus on meaning so as to introduce a third option, one that is analytic but focuses on form whenever necessary. As reported by him, this theory line “captures the advantages of analytic, focus-on-meaning approaches while avoiding their shortcomings” (p. 29).

Long then delineates the psycholinguistic (chapter 3) and philosophical (chapter 4) underpinnings of TBLT. In chapter 3, he enumerates empirical and conceptual problems in ISLA (instructed second language acquisition) and brings some possible explanations to them in order to ground his theory in. Among the problems mentioned by Long, the lack of success in incidental, implicit learning by adults; the impact of individual differences; and the effects of recasts and other types of feedback may have on learning are the ones mostly discussed. On the other hand, chapter 4 reviews the main philosophical principles that make TBLT an approach that seeks to form critical and autonomous students. According to the author, *learning by doing* is one of the most important aspects of this approach. While detailing his theory, Long talks about how TBLT is a learner-centered approach that offers the learner the chance of engaging in real activities that require agency and emancipation from them.

Having detailed the theoretical tenets of the TBLT, in Chapter 5, named *Task-Based Needs and Means Analysis*, Long discusses what, according to him, should be the first step in LT course design: the needs analysis (NA). As the author points out, “learner goals and needs can differ widely, both within and across groups” (p. 88). Therefore, an approach that accounts for student diversity is called for and the TBA approach does that by making use of tasks. In this chapter, Long argues not only for the relevance of NA but offers samples on how to promote such an important stage in second language classrooms.

*Identifying and Analyzing Target Tasks* are the topics dealt with in Chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 6, the author lays emphasis on the available sources of information for those interested in making use and considering the results of a needs analysis in TBLT. Next, the author presents some methods that vary from interviews to sampling of tasks and also considering the triangulation of sources and methodologies in the implementation of NA. Chapter 7, in turn, brings examples of target discourse to be used in NA tasks. As posed by the author, “TBLT attempts to make the connection between the internal, cognitive and external, social dimensions of tasks in several ways” (p. 179) and due to this characteristic, it contributes to understand how language is used to accomplish tasks.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus on syllabus design and materials, respectively. In Chapter 8, Long explores some minimum requirements for a syllabus content which include: i) the course syllabus, ii) the course content, and iii) the course sequencing. Afterward, the author delineates the most relevant aspects of different language teaching syllabuses according to diverse teaching approaches. Finally, Long focuses on the selection of tasks and the sequencing of them. In relation to the issue of material choices discussed in Chapter 9, Long pinpoints the importance of input simplification and elaboration when coming up with materials to be used in language classes. As explained by him, simplification of language “improves comprehensibility at the expense of language learning, which is the real goal” (p. 251) and therefore elaboration comes as an alternative since it “involves adding redundancy to a text, and often, more explicit signaling of its thematic structure” (p. 552). As it follows, Long offers a variety of samples to exemplify materials that corroborate to TBLT tenets. The author concludes by adding that “the best task-based materials are locally written and adapted by the teacher to make them suitable for use with his or her students” (p. 298).

*Methodological Principles and Pedagogic Procedures* is the title given to chapter 10. The chapter definitely offers paramount information to the reader as the author depicts the ten methodological principles of TBLT and some pedagogical procedures within the approach coined in this volume. As shown by Long, TBLT’s methodological principles are: i) use task, not text as the unit of analysis, ii) promote learning by doing, iii) elaborate input, iv) provide rich input, v) encourage inductive “chuck” learning, vi) focus on form, vii) provide negative feedback, viii) respect learner syllabi and developmental processes, ix) promote cooperative collaborative learning, and x) individualize instruction. Together, these principles aim at guaranteeing a successful and differentiated approach for second language teaching.

Chapter 11, entitled *Task-Based Assessment and Program Evaluation*, aims at reflecting on the criterion for evaluating a student within the TBLT framework. As stated by Long, “in task-based assessment, the focus remains on task completion, with a measurable behavioral outcome” (p. 332). The author also brings some criteria to evaluate TBLT programs aiming at establishing construct validity. At last, chapter 12 attempts to answer the question posed in its title: *Does TBLT have a future?* As the author explains himself “TBLT is a work in progress. It is not the only task-based approach and it may turn out not to be the best one” (p. 374). Although advocating in favor of TBLT, Long ends his book by emphasizing the need for more research, especially those with an eye to classroom environments.

Altogether, the book herewith reviewed -*Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*- may be considered as mandatory reading material for those

interested in understanding the benefits and pitfalls of the TBLT approach. Long's proposal to language teaching is carefully described in this book as well as thoroughly defended within theoretical grounds. Moreover, the organization of the book as well as the choice of chapter themes are appropriately made, offering the reader a complete perspective of the approach. However, one aspect of Long's book that must be considered by readers is the fact it is not suitable for a novice in the area of language teaching and task-based approach. From its start, the volume assumes basic knowledge of the field from those who read it, presenting a complex and intricate discussion about the interface of Second Language Acquisition theories and TBLT. Nevertheless, Long's book provides teachers and researchers with a range of insightful and relevant information about TBLT, a teaching and learning approach that ultimately aims at improving instructed SLA.

LONG, M. *Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*. 1. ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

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