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Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching: Theoretical, Methodological, and Pedagogical Perspectives. Johannes Eckerth and Sabine Siekmann. Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2008, 310 pp.

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8hx4z9qj

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 18(1)

ISSN
1050-4273

Author
Wang, Huan

Publication Date
2010-04-29

DOI
10.5070/L4181005128

Peer reviewed

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Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching: Theoretical, Methodological, and Pedagogical Perspectives. Johannes Eckerth and Sabine Siekmann. Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2008, 310 pp.

Reviewed by Huan Wang
CTB/McGraw Hill

Johannes Eckerth and Sabine Siekmann's *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching: Theoretical, Methodological, and Pedagogical Perspectives* is the 71th volume in the Duisburg Papers on Research in Language and Culture series. The essays collected in the book were developed from presentations on task-based language learning and teaching (TBLLT) at the 20th Biannual Meeting of the German Association on Task-Based Teaching in 2005. The presentations spurred a "highly productive, controversial, and thought-provoking" (p. 8) discussion at the conference, and the publication of the book is intended to disseminate ideas and findings from those studies.

The book is divided into four chapters. In the introductory chapter, Johannes Eckerth provides a critical review of four major theoretical frameworks in TBLLT. The review highlights two issues: the defining characteristics of a task and the role of a task in second language (L2) acquisition. Based on the review, a methodological framework is proposed, which is expected to accommodate various theoretical orientations. Three critical issues in TBLLT are then addressed, including 1) the task-versus-exercise distinction, 2) the construct validity of the task concept, and 3) the specification of learning outcomes. The discussion then moves away from task-based learning into the realm of task-based teaching, focusing on the role of tasks in L2 pedagogy. Finally, a model is presented that regards tasks as a conceptual link between L2 teaching and L2 research.

Eckerth's theoretical paper is followed by empirical studies in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 addresses TBLLT in classroom settings. Specifically, Michael Schart's study from an action research perspective demonstrates the influence of the teacher's behavior on students' perception of the tasks in a German language classroom in Japan. Silvia Pesce, based on results from a quasi-experimental research suggests two potential factors affecting the acquisition of forms in a TBLLT context: the source of knowledge (teacher instruction vs. learner self-discovery) and the type of task (cloze task vs. narrative task). Johannes Eckerth examined task-based learner-learner interaction from four perspectives: language behavior, learning processes, task-specific learning gains and learner-specific learning gains. Similar to Eckerth, David Ishii and Sabine Siekmann investigated the use of tasks that encourage learner collaboration. Ishii's study demonstrates the effect of the

Issues in Applied Linguistics ISSN 1050-4273
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Vol. 18 No. 1, 145-147

language dialog tasks in L2 writing instruction, and Siekmann's study sheds light on two aspects of the learning process during collaborative WebQuests: peer scaffolding and learner orientation.

Chapter 3 addresses the cognitive processes involved in TBLLT. To facilitate the analysis of the cognitive processes that learners engage when solving think-aloud tasks, Paula Krueger proposes a constructivist framework for language learning. Results of the analysis support the view of tasks as a learning opportunity, in which knowledge is "actively constructed by the learner rather than just passively received" (p. 198). Furthermore, the study results highlight the impact of socio-cultural contexts on the learning process and outcome. Different from Krueger's study on language learning, Lena Heine investigated the role of language in the processing of subject-specific tasks, particulary when L2 serves as the working language. The investigation is guided by a proposed framework focused on the interaction between general and linguistic problem-solving processes, with which empirical data are captured and described. One underlying assumption of the study is that "language expresses conceptual structure" and that "linguistic ability is one cognitive ability that can be described by means of the same basic principles as general cognitive ability" (p. 223).

The final chapter of the book addresses the special topic of task-based assessment. Helmut Johannes Vollmer examined the role of language competency in performance on subject-specific assessment. It is postulated that subject-specific competence is composed of three areas: content knowledge, procedural competence, and language/communicative competence. Related to this postulation is the notion of discourse functions, which can be regarded as the interface between content, language and thinking. Based on this postulation, geographical competence tasks were constructed and students' performance was analyzed. The analysis results highlight the need to improve subject-specific language competence of both L1 and L2 learners. The focus of attention is shifted back to the area of L2 language teaching and learning with Joerg-U. Kessler's study, which introduces *Rapid Profile*, a computer-assisted speech assessment program for determining language learners' level of language development. The design of the program assumes an incremental, standard path of second language development. The assumption, however, may not apply to all populations of second language learners.

It is noteworthy that the language learner populations examined in the above mentioned empirical studies are either German learners of a second/foreign language or learners of the German language. Although many of the study results and theoretical implications may generalize to other educational contexts, it is recommended that readers fully consider the typical characteristics of the German learners or learners of the German language and the typical socio-cultural classroom context that those learners may encounter before applying the ideas and findings to specific situations of their own interest.

Despite potentially limited generalizability of the empirical studies, the collection as a whole offers insight into a variety of methodological, acquisitional,

and pedagogical issues regarding TBLLT applications. Another strength of the collection lies in the density and quality of proposed theoretical models. Out of the ten studies, four major frameworks are postulated and discussed in detail, including the methodological framework on TBLLT, the constructivist framework for language learning, the framework on the interaction between general and linguistic problem-solving processes, and the model on subject-specific competency. Even when no framework is proposed, theoretical implications of the empirical results are discussed in length. Its breadth in topic coverage and depth in theoretical discussion make the collection a useful reference for researchers and practitioners in language education who want to delve deeper into an understanding of TBLLT.