

JACKSON, D. O. *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

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Within the area of language teaching and learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained much attention, including recent publications such as Ellis *et al* (2019), Mackey (2020) and Ellis (2021). Among the latest pieces of work related to this field is the book entitled “Task-Based Language Teaching”, written by Daniel O. Jackson and released at the end of 2022. Jackson’s book is part of a series called *Cambridge Elements in Language Teaching*, which aims to present relevant concepts and studies in the area in a clear and concise fashion.

Daniel O. Jackson, who is a professor at Kanda University of International Studies, has other contributions in the area of TBLT (Jackson, 2012; Jackson; Burch, 2017). In this new material, the author presents a comprehensive overview of the area by examining its theoretical groundwork, defining important key terms, and presenting important studies on task design and implementation in language classrooms. In terms of structure, the book contains 78 pages, which are split into six sections: (1) What is TBLT?; (2) The Task-Based curriculum; (3) Task-Based Approaches in Context; (4) Research into TBLT; (5) Teachers and Tasks; and (6) Epilogue: the Potential of TBLT. In the first section, the author starts by defining what Task-Based Language Teaching is and presenting its main characteristics. The highlight at the beginning of the unit is the discussion on the relevance of TBLT worldwide. Jackson points out some accomplishments that indicate the importance of the area, such as the creation of the

International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching and the release of the *TASK Journal*, an international periodical publication dedicated to disseminating research in the TBLT field. Jackson also shows that schools located in countries such as Belgium and Hong Kong have also embraced the task-based approach as their main teaching policy. Moreover, language programs and conferences have increasingly included disciplines and/or lectures on TBLT in their schedules, which reinforces the popularization of the area. In spite of the existence of several major publications on TBLT (such as Ellis *et al.*, 2019; Long; Ahmadian, 2022), Jackson argues for the need for short and practical guides to be made available for a larger audience of educators. In this sense, the book has the purpose of being an easy and practical guide for those who are already familiar with the area or for teachers who are eager to incorporate tasks in their teaching practice.

The section follows as the author presents basic definitions of TBLT and, more specifically, of tasks. As Jackson points out, when working with TBLT one should acknowledge the main differences regarding tasks. The author explains the differences between *target tasks* versus *pedagogic tasks* and how a *task-as-workplan* (that is, the design of a task) may be transformed or reinterpreted later as a *task-in-process* (once it is implemented). To exemplify tasks, Jackson brings five task types as proposed by Pica, Kanagry, and Falodun (1993). They are (1) jigsaw; (2) information gap; (3) problem-solving; (4) decision-making; and (5) opinion exchange. One notable aspect of this section is that the author not only cites the task types, but also gives a brief explanation of each one of them with some examples. By doing that, he makes them more tangible for those readers who are beginners in TBLT and want to implement different task types in their classrooms.

Section two is dedicated to presenting aspects of the TBLT curriculum. Jackson cites Brown's (1995) work to depict what components a language curriculum should have. Besides, he also starts this section by displaying the differences between a traditional curriculum and a task-based one. Again, one important aspect of this section is that the author explains, in a practical way, each component of a language curriculum applied within the context of TBLT. Even though all components are necessary for a language curriculum, it is worth highlighting two subsections during his explanation: materials development and teaching. The reason why these two subsections should be given attention is that the reader may be able to understand tasks with more practical examples. After all, when getting started with TBLT one may face difficulties in getting materials to ground their teaching practices. Jackson mentions, then, some

solutions and hints for those who are starting in the field. Besides, he also indicates books and some authors' works that may shed some light on one's practice. By doing that, readers, whether they are familiar with TBLT or not, can access different resources and feel more confident in producing their own material.

When it comes to the curriculum component regarding teaching, the author brings a relevant concept from the task-based context, that is, the tridimensional model proposed by Willis (1996) for task implementation. The framework is composed of three phases: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. This cycle has the purpose of "helping teachers acclimate to task-based teaching" (Jackson, 2022, p. 19). Along with each definition of the tridimensional phases, the author also presents examples of pieces of work that made use of this specific framework.

Section number three can be considered one of the highlights of the book, since it demonstrates the contextual needs of language teaching and therefore showcases how TBLT has been adopted and adapted in different settings. The author brings cases from diverse language environments such as the teaching of Chinese, Spanish, or even Zapotec, a language spoken in a Mexican community. Each context has its specificities in terms of learners' age, socioeconomic status, second language proficiency, and other relevant aspects that have to be taken into consideration in a language classroom. Therefore, by presenting several learning environments, the reader is capable of analyzing real and distinct situations in which TBLT is used. Moreover, it is also relevant to mention that the book approaches the teaching of additional languages other than English.

It is important to emphasize, however, that even though the author makes reference to different languages and to the adoption of TBLT in different countries, there is no reference to research or pedagogy from the Brazilian context. Researchers such as Silva (2018, 2020), Farias (2018), and Silva, Farias and D'Ely (2018) - to name but a few - have conducted several studies on the impacts of adopting TBLT in the teaching of English in the Brazilian context, including in basic public education. Moreover, TBLT has also influenced the area of Portuguese as an additional language, since the concept of tasks has been highly influential for the conception of the National Proficiency Exam of Brazilian Portuguese named *Celpe-Bras*. In this sense, the overview provided by the author could be enriched with more examples from the Global South.

When it comes to TBLT research, studies in the area have been conducted since the mid-80s. Moreover, there are highly important pieces of work that may be seen as the basis to

understand this area (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 20004; Ellis, 2009). As a way to provide the reader with more recent empirical studies on TBLT, section number four presents twenty-five studies carried out in the last decade. For better comprehension, the author divides the section into two branches, that is, studies concerning *tasks-as-workplans* and *tasks-in-process*. Once more, Jackson includes studies from different contexts and not only pieces of research conducted in English classrooms. Besides, by separating this section into two branches, readers may become aware of the characteristics of these two stages of tasks in a clearer way. The author still asserts the importance of investigating both stages of the task (*workplan* and *process*). Moreover, by presenting pieces of research conducted in both stages, the author emphasizes that both tasks characteristics, that is, task planning and task implementation, may impact language teaching and learning.

Section five debates the relationship between teachers and tasks. This section is highly important because it brings the role of the teacher in TBLT to the spotlight. Jackson cites some relevant pieces of work discussing the teacher's role in a task-based curriculum and he splits them into three moments: their perspectives, their preparation, and their agency. Concerning the first item, the teachers' perspective, Jackson shows some studies which demonstrate teachers may face some challenges when it comes to implementing TBLT, such as understanding basic concepts, implementing tasks correctly, or stimulating the use of the approach. In the teacher's preparation phase, the author questions whether teachers may be prepared to adopt TBLT in their classrooms. Some studies have shown that with task-based training, teachers have felt more prepared to apply and have partly succeeded in implementing tasks. Teachers' agency deals with the role teachers perform during the tasks. Jackson exemplifies some studies which argue that teachers' participation, either in their design or in their implementation, is crucial to the success of a task-based curriculum.

Finally, the last section of the book is said to be an epilogue. After providing practical examples and important definitions throughout the previous sections, Jackson uses this last opportunity to encourage the use of TBLT. He divides this part into three moments and argues that TBLT can transform different environments. The first transformation is related to classroom learning. The author explains that different from grammar-based methods, TBLT offers an enriched environment for both teachers and students due to the demand for collaborative interaction among peers. It is also important to mention that TBLT stimulates both cognitive and social processes. The second transformation concerns language programs. At this

point, Jackson refers back to the components of a language curriculum and adds reflexive questions to each component. This strategy may boost the reader's experience and instigate them to reflect on the contents they have learned throughout the sections and on their practices. The last transformation concerns transforming societies. Jackson points out some studies which show the compatibility between TBLT and Critical Language Pedagogy, being the latter a theory that is based on social justice. By incorporating critical language pedagogy into a task-based classroom, teachers may not only promote language development but also "uncover problematic issues in learners' lives" (Jackson, 2022, p. 57).

Even though the approximation between TBLT and Critical Pedagogy has been developed by Brazilian researchers (Silva, 2018; Farias, 2018; Silva; Farias; D'Ely, 2018) - who have coined the concept of 'critical tasks' to argue for the need to design and implement tasks that may foster social justice - Jackson's Element only briefly mentions da Silva's (2020) study on the role of the teacher in the implementation of critical tasks. At the same time, the author seems to indicate important new trends in the field of TBLT, since he acknowledges the importance of promoting a type of language education that is responsive to society's and students' needs, promoting social transformation.

Overall, Task-Based Language Teaching by Daniel O. Jackson is a valuable resource since it presents an overview of TBLT for researchers and practitioners interested in the area. However, it is important to mention that the book may present a downside for some people. At the same time that it is supposed to be a reader-friendly material, the different concepts and loaded terms of the area may be challenging for those who have no background knowledge in TBLT. On the other hand, if one is familiar with the area and is actually interested in a denser empirical book, Jackson's Element may not be the best option. In fact, the Element can be the starting point for someone who is interested or inserted in TBLT, since it contains a compilation of important references in the area. Nevertheless, the novice TBLT reader will have to delve into other pieces of work so as to better comprehend concepts that are only briefly presented by Daniel Jackson.

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