

**Convener: Roger Gilabert** (University of Barcelona, Spain)

TBLT as a field for research and pedagogy has seen an enormous growth and sophistication in the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods in the last four decades. A lot of the research initially happened in laboratory and face-to-face classroom environments and has seen an exponential increase in technologically oriented environments in recent years. Studies have ranged from fully experimental environments in laboratory settings, to quasi-experimental and classroom-based research designs and from a variety of perspectives: linguistic, cognitive or sociocultural. While interactive, cognitive, and sociocultural task variables have been explored for decades, the issue is whether such task design has been transferred to the pedagogic designs that research is meant to inform.

The goal of this symposium is to reflect on what has been achieved in terms of research on task design and research methods so far, as well as to identify the gaps in our research agendas and methodologies, and to identify future challenges ahead of us in order to achieve a fruitful, stable and expanding TBLT research program. Some voices in the field (see Bygate, 2020) have pointed out some of these challenges, like bringing research closer to what goes on in classrooms, achieving teacher-researcher collaboration, and encouraging teachers' involvement in research that is meaningful to them. Another central issue has been how to integrate a focus on language in tasks that are mainly driven by meaning and communication. The issue of how to incorporate the linguistic difficulty and complexity of tasks (Palotti, 2019) into task design and as research variables will also be addressed. In the symposium, more general issues about research replication (Mardsen et al., 2018) with a focus on TBLT research (Révész, 2018) and the ecological validity of TBLT research will also be discussed.

**Colloquium structure:**

5'	Introduction
20'	Paper 1: <i>Do we still need to mind the gap? Exploring the researcher-practitioner relationship in task design</i> – Koen Van Gorp
20'	Paper 2: <i>Exploring the neurocognitive correlates of task complexity</i> – Andrea Révész, Hyeonjeong Jeong, Shungo Suzuki, Haining Cui, Shunsui Mastuura, Kazuya Saito, and Motoaki Sugiura
20'	Paper 3: <i>Designing tasks with a pragmatic goal in the school curriculum</i> – Julia Barón and Alicia Martínez-Flor
20'	Paper 4: <i>A conceptual and methodological framework for investigating task complexity and difficulty</i> – Gabriele Palotti
20'	Paper 5: <i>Task Complexity in L2 Pronunciation Learning: Present Findings and Future Directions</i> – Ingrid Mora-Plaza, Joan C. Mora, Roger Gilabert
15'	Discussion and Q&A

**Paper 1: *Do we still need to mind the gap? Exploring the researcher-practitioner relationship in task design***

**Koen Van Gorp** (Michigan State University, USA)

As the field of TBLT has been very prolific in producing empirical studies and strong classroom practices, it is good to take stock and explore the advances the field has made in terms of task design and research methods in relationship to classroom practices. Has TBLT become a real researched-based pedagogy (Samuda, Van den Branden & Bygate, 2018), or have new and more sophisticated research methods widened the gap between research and practice? Have the empirical studies on task design provided a strong enough answer to how issues of task complexity and difficulty can be addressed in the classroom, or do research and pedagogical tasks need further alignment, and do researcher-practitioner relationships still need to be fostered (Sato et al., 2021)? In my talk, I will reflect on these critical questions from my position as researcher, teacher educator and co-editor of TASK. Journal on Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning.

**Paper 2: *Exploring the neurocognitive correlates of task complexity***

**Andrea Révész<sup>1</sup>, Hyeonjeong Jeong<sup>2</sup>, Shungo Suzuki<sup>3</sup>, Haining Cui<sup>2</sup>, Shunsui Mastuura<sup>2</sup>, Kazuya Saito<sup>1</sup>, and Motoaki Sugiura<sup>2</sup>** (<sup>1</sup>University College London, United Kingdom; <sup>2</sup>Tohoku University, Japan & <sup>3</sup>Waseda University, Japan)

The last three decades have seen significant development in understanding and describing the effects of manipulating task complexity on learner internal processes, with a view to facilitating TBLT theory-construction as well as pedagogical practice. So far, however, researchers have primarily employed behavioural methods to investigate task-generated cognitive load; little research has explored the neural correlates of task complexity during L2 production. In this presentation, we will first give a brief review of behavioural methods that have been used to investigate task-generated cognitive load in previous research. Then, we will consider and demonstrate how one type of neuroimaging technique, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), may be employed to generate information about the impact of task complexity manipulations on brain activation patterns. We will highlight the benefits of conducting neuroimaging research to study task complexity as well as discuss challenges involved in obtaining and interpreting task-generated neuroimaging data. We will also consider the potential advantages of triangulating cognitive and neural data in future research to gather fuller and more valid information about task-based neuro-cognitive processes.

**Paper 3: *Designing tasks with a pragmatic goal in the school curriculum***

**Julia Barón<sup>1</sup> and Alicia Martínez-Flor<sup>2</sup>** (<sup>1</sup>University of Barcelona & <sup>2</sup>University of Jaume I, Spain)

“Pragmatics is the Cinderella of Applied Linguistics” (González-Lloret, 2021) and in language teaching in general, not being present in course curricula, textbooks, and official language tests

(Roever, 2021). However, research in Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) has been claiming for the last decades that teaching pragmatics through a variety of approaches has positive effects on second and foreign (L2) language learning (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2020 for a review). Although Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is still recent in ILP, research so far has shown that using goal-oriented and meaning-based tasks seem to promote L2 pragmatic learning since language is used in a meaningful and real way (González-Lloret, 2019). What is still lacking in the field is to explore how previous research on TBLT (see for instance Gilabert and Malicka, 2021) may inform how to design and incorporate tasks with a pragmatic goal in the course curriculum. The aim of this presentation is thus to share our experience, conducted in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, of how information gathered in Needs Analysis (NA) aided the task selection, unit sequencing and pragmatics-based syllabus design in the educational contexts of primary and higher education.

**Paper 4: *A conceptual and methodological framework for investigating task complexity and difficulty***

**Gabriele Palotti** (University of Modena, Italy)

Terms like 'complexity', 'difficulty', 'cognitive demands', 'task requirements' often occur in discussions about task design, in both scientific research and applied contexts like teaching and assessment. However, such constructs are defined in many different ways, and even more numerous are their operationalizations. This talk will provide an overview of extant theories and methodologies, and will propose a conceptual framework for conducting research and pedagogical interventions in a clear and systematic way, with an emphasis on how 'validation arguments' may be put forward for a better understanding of these key constructs.

**Paper 5: *Task Complexity in L2 Pronunciation Learning: Present Findings and Future Directions***

**Ingrid Mora-Plaza, Joan C. Mora, Roger Gilabert** (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Decades of research on TBLT have demonstrated that task design may encourage second language development (Long, 2015) in terms of grammar (Révész, 2011), lexis (Gurzynski-Weiss & Baralt, 2015) and pragmatics (Baron et al., 2020). Nevertheless, little research has examined the effectiveness of task manipulation in inducing a focus on phonetic form (FoPF) during communication (Gurzynski-Weiss et al., 2017), and only few studies have investigated whether the Cognition Hypothesis predictions (Robinson, 2011) hold in making learners attend to phonetic form (Gordon, 2021). It is currently unknown to what extent increasing task complexity facilitates/hinders pronunciation accuracy when L2 phonology is not enhanced through task design.

In this colloquium, we will offer empirical evidence in favour of tasks to orient learners' attention to L2 phonetic form, and question whether the effects of cognitive complexity work differently when L2 pronunciation is focused or unfocused (Ellis, 2003). Recent research demonstrates that increasing the attentional demands of tasks along FoPF leads to more accurate speech productions; however, lexis and grammar may be prioritized at the expense of L2 pronunciation accuracy when

cognitive complexity increases, unless the pronunciation target is made explicit. Future steps in the area of task-based pronunciation teaching and learning will be discussed.

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