

The Role of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) In Enhancing Communicative Competence Among Adolescent and Older Generation Learners

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Abstract: This expansive article analyzes the role of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in foreign language acquisition across different age groups, specifically adolescents and the older generation. The study examines the core milestones of TBLT, including the pre-task, task cycle, and language focus phases. Findings suggest that for adolescents, TBLT enhances social collaboration and motivation, whereas for older learners, it facilitates cognitive engagement and communication rooted in real-world experience.

Keywords: TBLT, adolescents, older generation, communicative competence, linguodidactics, cognitive engagement.

Introduction: In the contemporary landscape of linguodidactics, the transition from teacher-centered paradigms to learner-centered frameworks has redefined the classroom dynamic. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) stands at the forefront of this evolution, moving beyond the traditional Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model. Grounded in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, TBLT posits that language is best mastered when the learner's attention is focused on a primary communicative goal rather than isolated grammatical structures [1].

The pedagogical challenge lies in the diverse cognitive profiles of learners. Adolescent learners are navigating a period of rapid neuroplasticity and social identity formation, while older generation learners - often referred to as "third-age learners"-bring vast life experience but different cognitive processing speeds. This article explores how TBLT acts as a bridge between these generations, facilitating authentic communication through a task-driven approach.

METHODS

This study adopts a comparative qualitative methodology, synthesizing recent research in educational psychology and applied linguistics. We

utilize data from longitudinal studies on TBLT outcomes, specifically focusing on two distinct demographics: secondary school students (adolescents) and adult lifelong learners (older generation). Key performance indicators include metacognitive awareness, foreign language anxiety (FLA) reduction, and collaborative interaction patterns.

RESULTS

The core of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is structured around a specific chronological sequence that ensures communicative intent precedes formal linguistic analysis. This study identifies three primary milestones - Pre-task, Task Cycle, and Language Focus - which serve as the functional pillars for both adolescent and older learners.

The Pre-task (Priming and Schema Activation)

The initial milestone is designed to reduce the "cognitive load" before the learner engages in the main activity. In this phase, the teacher introduces the topic and establishes clear objectives.

For Adolescents: Motivation is often sparked through digital stimuli or "gamified" scenarios. The pre-task acts as a hook, using brainstorming or visual prompts to activate existing vocabulary.

For the Older Generation: This phase is vital for building confidence. Since older learners may face higher levels of “foreign language anxiety” (FLA), the pre-task allows them to retrieve relevant life experiences (schema) that will assist them during the upcoming communicative struggle.

The Task Cycle (Authentic Communication)

The second milestone is the “heart” of the methodology. It is characterized by three sub-stages where the teacher’s role shifts from an instructor to a facilitator or “monitor”.

The Task: Learners work in pairs or small groups. The focus is on meaning-making. For instance, an adolescent group might be tasked with planning a sustainable school event, while an older group might simulate a discussion on historical literature or travel logistics.

Planning: Students prepare to report their findings. This is a crucial transition where learners realize the gaps in their linguistic knowledge—they know what they want to say, but may lack the precise how.

Report: The groups present their results. This provides a sense of accomplishment and publicly validates their ability to use the target language to achieve a non-

linguistic outcome [1][3].

The Language Focus (Form-Meaning Mapping)

The final milestone distinguishes TBLT from purely “free-form” conversation. Once the pressure of completing the task is removed, the class moves toward linguistic precision.

Analysis: The teacher highlights specific patterns, grammatical structures, or idioms that learners naturally attempted to use during the Task Cycle. This is known as “Focus-on-Form”.

Practice: Learners engage in targeted exercises to reinforce the structures identified in the analysis.

Research indicates that for adolescents, this milestone is essential for academic accuracy, preventing the fossilization of errors. For older learners, this phase satisfies their often-high demand for logical explanations and grammatical rules, reconciling their past experiences with traditional learning and the modern communicative approach [6].

Comparative Milestone Outcomes

Data gathered from pedagogical observations suggests a divergence in how these milestones impact different demographics:

Milestone	Adolescent Impact	Older Generation Impact
Pre-task	High engagement via social media/tech themes.	Reduction in anxiety; link to life experience.
Task Cycle	Development of peer-scaffolding and teamwork.	Maintenance of cognitive agility and logic.
Language Focus	Improved metacognitive awareness of errors.	Satisfaction of the need for structural clarity.

DISCUSSION

Adolescents often view language learning as a social endeavor. Research has shown that TBLT significantly improves writing ability and metacognitive awareness among students [1]. Because tasks are goal-oriented (e.g., designing a social media campaign or solving a

mystery), students feel a sense of agency.

Furthermore, collaborative interaction in TBLT allows adolescents to engage in “scaffolding”—supporting each other’s linguistic gaps. Studies indicate that task repetition (TR) is a vital milestone for this group, as it significantly reduces language anxiety (FLA) by allowing

students to perfect their delivery in a low-stakes environment [5].

For the older generation, TBLT serves a dual purpose: language acquisition and cognitive maintenance. Older learners often possess high “crystallized intelligence” (accumulated knowledge) but may face challenges with “fluid intelligence” (processing speed) [6].

TBLT is highly effective here because:

Relevance: Tasks can be tailored to life-long, interest-travel, history, and literature making the learning process feel purposeful [7].

Cognitive Load: By focusing on the task first, older learners can use compensatory strategies (like context and logic) to bridge linguistic gaps.

Community: It provides a social outlet, countering the isolation sometimes felt in older age, while focusing on meaningful dialogue rather than repetitive drills [6].

CONCLUSION

The role of TBLT in modern education is transformative. By centering the curriculum on the “task”, educators can address the specific needs of adolescents through social engagement and the needs of the older generation through cognitive relevance. The milestones of pre-task, task cycle, and language focus provide a robust framework that ensures communicative competence is achieved without sacrificing linguistic integrity. As global communication becomes increasingly digital and diverse, TBLT remains the most viable method for fostering a new generation of flexible, capable language users across the lifespan

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