

EDITORIAL –
TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED TASK-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNING

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The potential synergy between task-based language learning (TBLL) and the use of technology presents a number of challenges for current English teachers. Many of these are due to classroom constraints and/or to an unawareness of the value and utility that technology may have in language learning. As Chapelle (2001: 2) pointed out more than a decade ago, however, “anyone concerned with second language teaching and learning in the 21st century needs to grasp the nature of the unique technology-mediated tasks learners can engage in for language acquisition”. In this, both technology-mediated and task-based approaches “need to learn from each other” (Thomas & Reinders, 2010: 10) to inform task theory and practice. New critical directions, thus, need to be sought by questioning a) what technology-mediated learning has to offer to enrich TBLL, for example, in terms of task range, authenticity, learner autonomy, motivation and language improvement (Kern *et al.*, 2004; Kern, 2006); b) what viable support TBLL can provide in choosing and designing technology-enhanced language learning resources and activities (Chapelle, 2003; Skehan, 2003).

This special issue of the *Journal of Teaching English with Technology* features a collection of nine original articles that tackle *Technology-mediated task-based English language learning* from a broad range of areas of interest with international perspectives that will appeal to stakeholders in the field. The contexts of the studies span different educational settings in Greece, Italy, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal and the USA, stemming from new beliefs about language pedagogy which respond to 21st-century learning demands.

The issue starts with two project-based contributions to technology-mediated task-based language teaching and learning. In his article on “Critical Issues in the Evaluation of an International Project dedicated to Technology-mediated TBLT (PETALL)”, *António Lopes* (Portugal) offers useful insights into an international project, whose aim is to design ICT-based tasks for language learning across different educational settings. The article helps

teachers perceive the potential of engaging in similar projects, which need, however, to be sustained by a credible evaluation strategy.

Maria Grazia Sindoni (Italy) also makes a project-based contribution in her article on “Teaching English Multimodally. The Use of New Travel Websites in EFL Environments”. Through the Italian national project, Access Through Text, the author highlights how task-based activities on New Travel websites can be introduced to tackle issues related to learners’ reading strategies, textual barriers and online access to English web texts in EFL educational environments.

The following four contributions relate to another important area, namely, the pedagogical uses of authentic digital tools and materials for task-based learning. In her article entitled “Digital Storytelling: an integrated approach to language learning for the 21st century student”, *Sandra Ribeiro* (Portugal) argues that Digital Storytelling can foster positive student development in the foreign language-learning classroom. Drawing on a previous study, the paper illustrates how the task-based process of creating a Digital Story enhances and integrates learners’ multi-literate skills, interpersonal relationships and self-knowledge.

In a similar vein, *Anna Franca Plastina* (Italy) advocates that “ESP Learner Self-generated Feedback as a Technology-enhanced Task” has a potential role to play in learners’ formative processes. The experimental study focuses on learners’ knowledge restructuring processes and perceptions while engaged in the task of creating screencasts, or digital audio-visual recordings of oral medical reports for authentic professional purposes.

Within the realm of ESP, *Sandra Ribeiro*, *Suzana Cunha* and *Manuel Moreira da Silva* (Portugal) address the topic of “Language Tools: Communicating in Today’s World of Business”. Their critical reflections focus on how the tools of Machine Translation and Computer-Aided Translation are perceived by business communicators in an ESP task-based environment, and on how their use mirrors teacher-learner perceptions.

Learner perceptions are further surveyed by *Trisevgeni Liantou* (Greece) in her study on “Intermediate Greek EFL Learners’ Attitudes to On-line Teaching Practices: A Blended Task-based English Language Learning Approach”. In adopting a blended teaching approach through the use of open on-line technologies, such as OmniumClass, the author investigates young learners’ attitudes toward CALL in general, and more specifically toward their engagement in a dynamic learning environment.

Moving from the pedagogical uses of authentic digital tools to their pedagogical evaluation, *Anmol Ahmad* and *Fizza Farrukh* (Pakistan) focus on the “Significance of Social Applications on a Mobile Phone for English Task-Based Language Learning”. A set of social

applications currently available on mobile phones is evaluated, showing how they support task-based learning principles. These versatile features lead the authors to suggest Application Assisted Language Learning (APALL) as an offspring of MALL.

The final two contributions in the issue reflect the wide diversity in implementing technology-mediated task-based English language learning. *Susan Jacques Pierson* (USA) examines the impact of integrating CALL and TBLL with English Language Learners and their teachers in the challenging context of Swaziland in Southern Africa. In her article on “Bridges to Swaziland: Using Task-Based Learning and Computer-Mediated Instruction to Improve English Language Teaching and Learning”, the author reports how Orphans and Vulnerable Children and trained teachers find the experience empowering. On the other hand, *Agnieszka Gadomska* (Poland) highlights how using LEGO blocks for Technology Mediated Task-based English Language Learning can boost academic writing based on the principle of *learning by making*. The author describes the transformation of the use of Lego-based activity over time, and introduces the Lego technique in the design of a TBLL lesson plan targeted to support the writing principles of coherence and cohesion.

In conclusion, it is a pleasure to point out that this edition includes an international blend and variety of technology-enhanced views of task-based learning, which will hopefully offer the reader food for thought.

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