



Investigating Task Performance and Task-based Learning from Different Angles: Complementary Perspectives or Incommensurable Paradigms?

Johannes Eckerth (King's College London) &
Parvaneh Tavakoli (London Metropolitan University)
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p.tavakoli@londonmet.ac.uk



Structure of the Colloquium

- Parvaneh Tavakoli: Introduction
- Peter Skehan: Cognitive approaches to tasks: Performance and development
- Pauline Foster: Not necessarily strewn with potholes: the case for a smoother path to L2 task-based development
- John Hellermann: The dynamic and contingent nature of language-learning tasks: an empirical study of learners of French and English
- Final Discussion



Different Perspectives to TBLL & T

- Cognitive accounts
- Interactionist accounts
- Sociocultural Theory
- Conversation Analysis (CA for SLA)



Task performance & Task-based Language Learning

- **Guiding questions**

- What are the contributions of each perspective?
- Can these accounts inform each other?
- What is the relationship between
 - task design & task performance?
 - Task performance & L2 learning?



Cognitive Accounts & TBLL&T

- Role of attention in L2 learning
 - Attention on meaning
 - Attention on form
- Attentional resources
 - Limited or multiple (Skehan, 1998; Robinson, 2001)
- Channeling attention by use of tasks (Foster & Skehan, 1997)
- Task design and task performance
- Pedagogical relevance of research



Cognitive Accounts: Contribution

- Linking learning/memory research to SLA
- Insight into L2 processing
- Evidence of linguistic and cognitive task demands
- Pedagogical implications (task design, teacher and materials role,...)
- Ecologically valid tasks and research designs



Cognitive Accounts: Issues

- Cross-sectional research
- Task performance as a function of task demands
- Little evidence of language development overtime and/or long-term benefits
- Little attention to contextual and social factors
- The relationship between performance and learning not thoroughly investigated or discussed



Interactionist Accounts & TBLL&T

- Originated in the Nativist accounts of first language acquisition
- Interaction in L2 learning (Long, 1989)
- Communication breakdown, N/A, comprehensible input → SLA
- Role of output (Swain, 1985, 1995)
- Role of noticing (Schmidt, 1990, 2001)



Interactionist Accounts: Contribution

- Research productivity
- Tasks elicit interactional adjustments
- 'noticing' fills the gap between comprehension & acquisition
- Cognitive processes triggered by interaction
- Pedagogical implications (teacher feedback, task design, ...)



Interactionist Accounts: Issues

- Cross-sectional research
- Predominant product-orientation
- Prioritizing internal over ecological validity
- Little evidence of language development overtime



Sociocultural Theory & TBLL&T

- Learner agency and co-constructing knowledge through task (Lantolf, 2000)
- Task to facilitate L2 learning: a socially constructed process
- Process orientation (Ohta, 2001)
- Interaction in task creates ZPD (through scaffolding) (Donato, 1994)
- Task as a tool of mediation



Sociocultural Theory: Contribution

- Increased sensitivity towards learner agency & task context
- Widened perspective on peer assistance
- Independent & beyond-comprehension problems
- Theoretical significance & empirical accounts of peer “scaffolding”



Sociocultural Theory: Issues

- Role of task in learning
- Task design & task implementation
- What counts as learning?
- Limited to microanalysis (a fuller picture needed)



CA for SLA (situated learning) & TBLL&T

- A range of different research positioning: A special issue of IRAL 2009
- An emic perspective to learning
- L2 learning rooted in and shaped by participation in talk-in-interaction (Kasper, 2009)
- Language learning: developing interactional competence (Hellermann, 2009)
- Participation, situatedness & acquisition
- A Socio-cognitive orientation to SLA (Markee & Seo, 2009)



CA for SLA: Contribution

- Analysis of learning talk
- New methodological insights into tracing L2 development overtime
- Possibility of applying exogenous theories to data
- Opening up new horizons to theories of L2
- Attention to participant-relevant understanding (identity, context, learnership)
- Studying classroom and language users as 'communities of practice'



CA for SLA: Issues

- Volume of CA studies too small to provide a profound understanding of language development
- CA: a set of techniques or an independent L2 learning account?
- There is a gap between CA's methodological and theoretical assumptions
- Absence of a "learning mechanism"



Task performance & Task-based Language Learning

■ **Guiding questions**

- What are the contributions of each perspective?
- Can these accounts inform each other?
- Can we define how L2 is learnt?
- What is the relationship between
 - task design & task performance?
 - Task performance & L2 learning?

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