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**THE ROLE OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN DEVELOPING
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Pang Xia, A.A. Barkovich

Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus

2296243319@qq.com

In the context of globalization, intercultural communicative competence has become an essential goal of English education. However, traditional teaching methods tend to prioritize lin-

guistic proficiency over intercultural competence, treating cultural information as static facts rather than dynamic interpretive frameworks. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes authentic tasks and meaning negotiation, offers a promising pedagogical alternative. This paper aims to explore the role of TBLT in developing intercultural competence. It reviews the key principles of TBLT and the multidimensional construct of intercultural competence, argues for their theoretical alignment, and discusses implications for teaching.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, intercultural competence, TBLT, language teaching

Introduction. In the context of globalization, English serves as a global lingua franca connecting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Effective cross-cultural communication has become an essential skill in academic, professional and social domains. Intercultural communicative competence is increasingly regarded as a core component of English education.

However, traditional teaching methods often prioritize linguistic proficiency over intercultural competence, treating cultural information as static facts rather than dynamic interpretive frameworks. Cultural learning in many English classrooms remains limited to the transmission of holidays, customs and etiquette, without fostering deeper understanding of values, beliefs or communication styles.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a promising alternative. TBLT emphasizes learning through authentic tasks in which learners use language to achieve real-world outcomes. This approach has been widely applied in second language education, but its specific application in fostering intercultural competence remains to be further explored. Given that cross-cultural communication is inherently task-oriented and context-dependent, TBLT may provide an ideal framework for developing learners' ability to navigate cultural differences.

This paper aims to explore the role of TBLT in developing intercultural competence. It reviews the key principles of TBLT and the multidimensional construct of intercultural competence, argues for their theoretical alignment, and discusses implications for teaching.

Task-Based Language Teaching: Key Principles (English with citations)

Task-Based Language Teaching is a pedagogical approach in which learners use language to complete meaningful tasks. Nunan defines a "task" as a classroom activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome or solve a problem. Unlike traditional exercises designed around isolated grammar points, tasks require learners to use language communicatively and purposefully [1, p. 4]. The theoretical foundation of TBLT lies in the principle of "learning by doing," that is, language is acquired through use rather than through explicit instruction alone.

Willis proposes a widely adopted three-stage framework for TBLT implementation [2, p. 53]. The first stage is Pre-task, during which the teacher introduces the topic and the task, activates relevant vocabulary, and provides necessary background information. The second stage is the Task Cycle, which consists of three components: task completion (learners work in pairs or groups to complete the task), planning (learners prepare to report their findings), and report (learners present their results to the class). The third stage is Language Focus, during which learners analyze and practice specific language features that emerged during the task [2, p. 62].

TBLT is characterized by several key features. First, tasks are authentic, meaning they reflect real-world language use. Second, meaning is prioritized over form, although attention to language form occurs after meaning has been negotiated. Third, TBLT is

learner-centered, with the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than a knowledge transmitter. Fourth, tasks create opportunities for meaning negotiation, which is believed to facilitate language acquisition [1, p. 15].

Intercultural Competence: A Multidimensional Construct

Intercultural communicative competence is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations [3, p. 34]. This competence goes beyond linguistic proficiency to include the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for successful cross-cultural interaction.

Byram's model of intercultural competence can be simplified into three core dimensions: knowledge, attitude, and skills [3, p. 34].

The knowledge dimension includes understanding of one's own culture and other cultures, including social norms, values, beliefs, and communication styles. The attitude dimension refers to an open, curious, and respectful disposition toward cultural differences. Learners with intercultural attitudes are willing to suspend judgment, question their own cultural assumptions, and engage with unfamiliar cultural practices. The skill dimension encompasses the ability to interpret cultural phenomena, discover new cultural information, and interact appropriately in real-time intercultural encounters.

Traditional cultural teaching often follows a transmission model, in which teachers present cultural facts and students memorize them [4, p. 112]. This approach may help learners acquire knowledge about other cultures, but it fails to develop the attitudes and skills required for authentic intercultural communication. Learners may know facts about another culture yet remain unable to handle misunderstandings or adapt their behavior in actual encounters. This gap between knowledge and action calls for pedagogical approaches that provide opportunities for practice, reflection, and meaning negotiation.

The Alignment Between TBLT and Intercultural Competence

The intrinsic features of TBLT make it particularly suitable for developing intercultural competence. Several mechanisms explain this alignment.

First, task authenticity creates conditions that mirror real-world intercultural communication. TBLT uses tasks that learners might encounter outside the classroom, such as resolving a misunderstanding, making a request across cultural contexts, or collaborating with international peers. By engaging in authentic tasks, learners practice handling cultural differences in a safe environment, thereby developing the skill dimension of intercultural competence. As Nunan argues, authentic tasks bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use [1, p. 15].

Second, meaning negotiation is central to both TBLT and intercultural communication. In task completion, learners must work together to achieve a shared goal, which often requires clarifying intentions, checking understanding, and repairing breakdowns in communication. These negotiation processes are exactly what learners need in real intercultural encounters. Meaning negotiation also exposes learners to alternative perspectives, fostering awareness that the same situation can be interpreted differently across cultures [3, p. 50].

Third, the post-task reflection built into Willis's framework promotes attitude development. During the language focus stage, teachers can guide learners to reflect not only on language forms but also on cultural assumptions underlying their communication. Reflective tasks such as journal writing or group discussion help learners examine their own cultural positions, recognize biases, and develop more open attitudes toward difference [4, p. 112].

Fourth, collaborative learning provides opportunities for intercultural exposure. When learners work in diverse groups, they encounter different communication styles, problem-solving approaches, and cultural norms. This exposure itself constitutes intercultural learning. Peer scaffolding during group tasks also creates a supportive environment where learners feel safe to experiment with new cultural behaviors.

In summary, TBLT aligns with intercultural competence development through four mechanisms: authenticity, meaning negotiation, reflective practice, and collaborative learning.

Implications for Teaching. Adopting Task-Based Language Teaching for intercultural competence development requires several significant shifts in teaching practice. These implications concern teacher roles, task design, assessment practices, reflection facilitation, teacher professional development, and classroom resources.

Teacher role transformation. The teacher's role shifts from transmitting cultural facts to designing authentic tasks and facilitating reflective learning. Teachers need to select or create tasks that reflect realistic intercultural encounters and provide appropriate support without controlling the interaction. Teachers should also model how to clarify misunderstandings, express curiosity, and adjust communication strategies during cross-cultural interactions [5, p. 112].

Task sequencing and progression. Tasks should be sequenced from structured to open-ended, allowing learners to gradually develop confidence and strategic competence. Beginning learners may benefit from more guided tasks with clear models, while advanced learners can handle less structured tasks requiring spontaneous adaptation. This progression from simple to complex ensures that learners are neither overwhelmed by excessive challenge nor bored by insufficient challenge [6, p. 78].

Process-oriented assessment. Assessment should focus on process rather than product. Teachers can assess learners' performance during task completion, the quality of their reflections, and their ability to articulate cultural understanding. Self-assessment and peer assessment can also be incorporated to promote metacognitive awareness. Process-oriented assessment aligns with the TBLT philosophy that learning occurs through practice and reflection.

The role of post-task reflection. Teachers should recognize the central role of post-task reflection in attitude development. Completing a task does not automatically lead to a shift in intercultural attitudes. Teachers need to design guiding questions that help learners identify their own cultural assumptions, reflect on confusion that arose during interaction, and consciously adjust future behavior.

Teacher professional development. The effective implementation of TBLT places higher demands on teachers' own intercultural competence and task design skills. Teachers who lack personal experience with cross-cultural communication may struggle to design authentic tasks or facilitate meaningful reflection. Therefore, teacher education programs should incorporate intercultural training as a core component [5, p. 124]. Without such preparation, even well-designed tasks may fail to achieve their intended learning outcomes.

Classroom environment and resources. Creating an environment conducive to intercultural learning requires attention to classroom resources and social dynamics. Teachers should collect authentic materials that reflect real intercultural communication, representing diverse cultural perspectives rather than presenting a monolithic view of any culture. Additionally, teachers should establish classroom norms that respect cultural

differences, encourage risk-taking, and treat misunderstandings as learning opportunities.

In summary, the effective implementation of TBLT for intercultural competence development depends on multiple factors including teacher competence, task sequencing, process-oriented assessment, intentional reflection, professional development, and supportive classroom environments.

Conclusion. This paper has explored the role of Task-Based Language Teaching in developing intercultural competence. By reviewing the key principles of TBLT and the multidimensional construct of intercultural competence, and by arguing for their theoretical alignment, the paper reaches several conclusions that have both theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretical contributions. A theoretical alignment exists between TBLT and the development of intercultural competence. This alignment is manifested through four core features of TBLT—authenticity, meaning negotiation, reflective practice, and collaborative learning—which correspond respectively to the skill dimension, knowledge dimension, attitude dimension, and integrated development of intercultural competence. This alignment is not coincidental but stems from a shared constructivist epistemological foundation, namely that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and practice. By explicitly articulating this alignment, the paper helps fill a gap in the existing literature, which has often treated TBLT and intercultural competence as separate domains. The paper provides a theoretical justification for using TBLT to achieve intercultural learning outcomes, offering a framework that future research can build upon.

Practical value for educators. TBLT offers a viable path for overcoming the limitations of traditional intercultural teaching. Traditional instructional models treat cultural knowledge as static facts to be transmitted, leaving learners knowing “what” but not “why” or “how,” and thus unable to respond flexibly in authentic intercultural situations. TBLT shifts cultural learning from “learning about culture” to “learning through cultural practice”. For classroom teachers, this shift means moving away from lectures about cultural differences and toward activities where learners experience cultural differences directly. The implications discussed above concerning teacher roles, task sequencing, assessment, reflection, professional development, and classroom environment provide practical guidance for implementation.

Teacher competence as a key factor. The effective implementation of TBLT places higher demands on teachers' professional competence. Teachers need not only the skills of task design but also intercultural competence themselves, in order to design authentic and appropriate tasks and provide timely and effective guidance during the task process. This finding has important implications for language teacher education. Intercultural competence should become a core component of teacher training programs [7, p. 89]. Without such training, even well-designed TBLT activities may fail to develop learners' intercultural competence because teachers lack the ability to facilitate reflection, model appropriate strategies, or respond effectively to unexpected cultural issues that arise during tasks.

Limitations of the paper. This paper has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, as a theoretical paper, it does not provide empirical data to verify the actual effects of TBLT on intercultural competence development. While the theoretical alignment is well-supported by existing literature, empirical studies are needed to confirm that learners in TBLT classrooms actually demonstrate greater improvement in intercultural competence compared to learners in traditional classrooms. Second, the paper does

not address differences across educational contexts. The effectiveness of TBLT may vary depending on learners' age, language proficiency, prior intercultural experience, and the cultural composition of the classroom. Third, the paper focuses primarily on English language teaching contexts and may not apply directly to other language learning settings.

Future research directions. Future research may proceed in several directions. First, empirical studies could examine the actual effects of TBLT on intercultural competence in different educational settings, using both quantitative measures such as pre- and post-tests and qualitative measures such as interviews and reflective journals. Second, researchers could explore how TBLT might be combined with digital technologies to provide learners with more personalized and accessible intercultural learning experiences. Third, future work could investigate how TBLT might be systematically integrated into language teacher education curricula to enhance teachers' own intercultural teaching competence. Fourth, longitudinal studies could examine whether the intercultural competence developed through TBLT persists over time and transfers to real-world intercultural encounters outside the classroom.

In summary, Task-Based Language Teaching provides a theoretically sound and practically feasible instructional framework for developing intercultural competence. The alignment between TBLT features and intercultural competence dimensions, together with the practical implications for classroom implementation, suggests that TBLT deserves serious consideration by language educators seeking to integrate language and culture teaching. While further empirical research is needed, this paper's discussion lays a foundation for such research and offers guidance for practitioners who wish to implement this approach in their own classrooms.

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РОЛЬ ЦЕЛЕНАПРАВЛЕННОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ ЯЗЫКУ В РАЗВИТИИ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ

Пан Ся

Белорусский государственный университет, Минск, Республика Беларусь
2296243319@qq.com

В условиях глобализации межкультурная коммуникативная компетентность стала важнейшей целью обучения английскому языку. Однако традиционные методы обучения, как правило, отдают приоритет знанию языка, а не межкультурной компетенции, рассматривая культурную информацию как статичные факты, а не как динамичную систему

интерпретации. Обучение языку на основе заданий предлагает многообещающую педагогическую альтернативу. Цель данной статьи - изучить роль TBLT в развитии межкультурной компетенции. В нем рассматриваются ключевые принципы TBLT и многомерная концепция межкультурной компетенции, обосновывается их теоретическое соответствие и обсуждается значение для преподавания.

Ключевые слова: обучение языку на основе заданий, межкультурная компетенция, TBLT, преподавание языка