

# THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ON DEVELOPING CREATIVE COMPETENCE OF FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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## Abstract

This article investigates the role and impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing the creative competence of future foreign language teachers. As the demands of 21st-century education increasingly emphasize innovation, adaptability, and learner-centered pedagogy, creativity has become a core competency for language educators. TBLT offers a pedagogical framework that fosters creativity by engaging learners in real-world, problem-solving tasks that require original thought, linguistic flexibility, and collaboration. Drawing on theoretical foundations, empirical studies, and pedagogical practices, this paper demonstrates how TBLT enhances creative competence in teacher education contexts. Practical implications for teacher training, curriculum design, and future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching, creative competence, foreign language teacher education, pedagogical innovation, language learning.

## Introduction

The global shift toward communicative and learner-centered language instruction has positioned creativity as a key pedagogical competence. In the context of foreign language teacher education, creative competence encompasses the ability to generate original teaching strategies, adapt to diverse classroom scenarios, and foster student engagement through innovative methodologies (Richards, 2013). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a dynamic approach that not only promotes language acquisition but also cultivates creative thinking and problem-solving—skills essential for the development of competent, adaptive foreign language teachers.

This article aims to explore how TBLT contributes to the development of creative competence in pre-service foreign language teachers. It analyzes the theoretical foundations of TBLT, outlines the elements of creative competence, and evaluates empirical evidence supporting the integration of TBLT in teacher training programs.

## Theoretical Framework

### Creative Competence in Language Education

Creative competence in teacher education refers to the capacity to design, implement, and evaluate pedagogical practices that are original, contextually appropriate, and effective in

promoting language learning (Craft, 2005). According to Sternberg and Lubart (1999), creativity involves the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate, a notion that is highly relevant in the ever-evolving field of language teaching.

For language teachers, creativity manifests through instructional design, classroom management, adaptation to learners' needs, and the incorporation of diverse cultural and linguistic resources (Garton & Richards, 2011). Thus, teacher education programs must prioritize the development of this competence through experiential, reflective, and task-oriented methodologies.

### Foundations of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT is grounded in interactionist theories of second language acquisition (SLA), particularly Long's (1985) Interaction Hypothesis and Ellis's (2003) principles of focus on form. In TBLT, the primary unit of instruction is the task—a goal-oriented activity that requires learners to use the target language to achieve communicative outcomes. Tasks are structured around real-life situations, demanding learners to process language meaningfully, negotiate meaning, and apply linguistic resources in context (Nunan, 2004).

TBLT aligns closely with constructivist learning principles, offering learners autonomy, responsibility, and engagement. These features create fertile ground for developing creativity, as learners must often devise original solutions, navigate ambiguity, and collaborate effectively.

### TBLT as a Catalyst for Creative Competence

TBLT promotes creative competence through several pedagogical mechanisms:

1. **Authentic Problem-Solving:** involves engaging learners in meaningful, real-world tasks that require them to think critically, use language purposefully, and apply divergent thinking to achieve specific communicative goals.

In TBLT, learners are placed in lifelike scenarios that simulate genuine communicative challenges such as planning a trip, negotiating a contract, or resolving a cultural misunderstanding. These tasks compel learners to synthesize prior knowledge, adapt language to context, and create novel responses (Willis & Willis, 2007). According to Beghetto and Kaufman (2014), creativity in problem-solving emerges when individuals are required to go beyond formulaic language use and generate contextually relevant and imaginative outcomes. This approach nurtures creative fluency and promotes flexible thinking—hallmarks of effective language educators.

2. **Collaborative Creativity:** refers to the co-construction of knowledge and novel ideas through joint participation, negotiation of meaning, and mutual support in group settings. TBLT encourages learners to work in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, which facilitates the generation of multiple perspectives and promotes the pooling of linguistic and cognitive resources. Swain (2000) emphasizes that collaborative dialogue—where learners actively engage in co-constructing language—serves not only as a medium for acquisition but also as a

process of creative knowledge production. Group tasks such as designing teaching materials, creating role-plays, or constructing digital stories challenge learners to synthesize diverse viewpoints, navigate interpersonal dynamics, and develop shared linguistic artifacts, thereby fostering creative competence in a socially situated context.

**3. Flexibility and Autonomy:** Flexibility and autonomy in TBLT refer to learners' capacity to make independent choices regarding the content, process, and presentation of tasks, allowing for self-expression, innovation, and learner agency. TBLT frameworks often allow learners to determine how they will approach a task, choose the linguistic forms they prefer to use, and decide on the format of their output. This pedagogical freedom creates space for experimentation and ownership over the learning process. Ellis (2009) argues that such learner-centered environments encourage intrinsic motivation and creative risk-taking, as students feel empowered to try unconventional approaches without fear of failure. In language teacher education, fostering autonomy equips future educators with the confidence to design and adapt instructional strategies creatively and responsively.

**4. Reflective Practice:** Reflective practice is a metacognitive process in which learners analyze their task performance, evaluate outcomes, and generate insights for future improvement, thereby enhancing creativity and professional growth. Reflection is a critical component of TBLT, often built into the post-task phase. Learners are encouraged to assess their linguistic choices, group dynamics, problem-solving strategies, and communicative effectiveness. Farrell (2016) contends that reflection deepens teachers' awareness of their pedagogical decisions and fosters the ability to adapt creatively in future contexts. Reflective practices such as journaling, peer evaluation, and debriefing sessions stimulate self-discovery and innovation, enabling pre-service teachers to cultivate a creative mindset that they can later transfer into classroom instruction.

### Empirical Evidence

Numerous studies support the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing creative competence. For example, Carreira (2012) found that task-based projects increased pre-service teachers' confidence in using creative teaching methods and adapting tasks to diverse learners. Similarly, González-Lloret and Nielson (2015) documented how digital TBLT enhanced creative language use and pedagogical innovation in online teacher education.

In a study by Bui and Nguyen (2018), Vietnamese EFL pre-service teachers who engaged in task-based microteaching reported higher levels of engagement, motivation, and creative thinking. Tasks such as designing materials, simulating real-life classroom challenges, and integrating intercultural elements were especially effective in cultivating creativity.

### Implications for Teacher Education

To harness the benefits of TBLT in developing creative competence, teacher education programs should:

- Integrate **task-based practicum components**, where pre-service teachers design and implement original tasks.
- Provide **reflective tools** (e.g., journals, portfolios) to support metacognitive awareness and creative growth.
- Foster a **collaborative learning culture**, encouraging the sharing of ideas and peer feedback.
- Include **interdisciplinary tasks**, linking language with arts, technology, or social sciences to stimulate broader creative engagement.

### Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) serves as an effective pedagogical model for fostering **creative competence** in future foreign language teachers. As evidenced through theoretical analysis and empirical support, TBLT creates an instructional environment characterized by authenticity, learner autonomy, reflective practice, and collaborative engagement—all of which are essential conditions for cultivating creativity in teacher development.

A core result of the analysis is the identification of four interrelated mechanisms—**authentic problem-solving, collaborative creativity, flexibility and autonomy, and reflective practice**—that facilitate the enhancement of creative competence. These mechanisms not only stimulate divergent thinking and problem-solving but also mirror the real-world demands of contemporary language classrooms. TBLT tasks engage pre-service teachers in activities that require adaptive thinking, cultural sensitivity, and the capacity to innovate pedagogically.

However, the integration of TBLT into foreign language teacher education is not without its challenges. Three major impediments were identified:

1. **Curricular Constraints:** Many teacher education programs are bound by rigid, standardized curricula that prioritize content delivery over pedagogical innovation. This structure often limits the implementation of open-ended, creative tasks inherent in TBLT (Richards, 2013).
2. **Assessment Limitations:** Creativity is inherently qualitative and context-dependent, making it difficult to assess using traditional, standardized evaluation tools. The absence of flexible, formative, and performance-based assessment models constrains the measurement of creative competence (Craft, 2005).
3. **Instructor Preparedness:** Some teacher educators lack formal training in TBLT or innovative instructional approaches. This deficiency hinders effective modeling of creative task design and limits the professional development of pre-service teachers (Garton & Richards, 2011).

Addressing these issues requires **systemic reform** at both institutional and curricular levels. Teacher education programs should prioritize the integration of **process-oriented and qualitative assessment frameworks** that capture creativity in action, such as portfolios, self-evaluation, peer feedback, and performance-based rubrics (Carreira, 2012). Additionally,

**faculty development initiatives** should be implemented to equip instructors with the necessary theoretical and practical expertise in TBLT and creative pedagogy.

Another important implication emerging from this discussion is the necessity to **conceptualize creative competence not as an innate trait**, but as a **developable skill** that can be cultivated through well-structured, learner-centered methodologies like TBLT. When teacher candidates are engaged in creative, task-based learning processes, they are more likely to transfer these strategies to their future classrooms, thereby fostering a sustainable cycle of innovation in language education.

Future research should further investigate the **long-term effects** of TBLT-based training on teacher creativity, particularly through **longitudinal and mixed-method studies**. Examining how creative competence develops over time and how it manifests in professional teaching practices could provide deeper insights into the transformative potential of task-based instruction.

### Conclusion

This study has examined the vital role of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing creative competence among future language educators. Through its emphasis on authentic communication, learner autonomy, collaborative engagement, and reflective practice, TBLT offers a pedagogical framework that aligns with the cognitive and affective dimensions of creative development in teacher education. Theoretical foundations and empirical research consistently highlight TBLT's effectiveness in encouraging divergent thinking, adaptive problem-solving, and innovation—qualities indispensable for language teachers operating in today's complex, multicultural classrooms.

However, the successful implementation of TBLT requires overcoming structural challenges such as restrictive curricula, inadequate assessment tools, and limited instructor preparedness. Addressing these barriers calls for systemic changes, including the integration of flexible, process-oriented evaluation methods and comprehensive professional development initiatives for teacher educators.

In recognizing creativity as a dynamic, teachable competence rather than a fixed trait, this article advocates for the deliberate inclusion of TBLT in language teacher education programs. By equipping pre-service teachers with the tools to think creatively and teach responsively, TBLT contributes not only to individual professional growth but also to broader pedagogical innovation in language education. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impact of TBLT on teacher identity formation, classroom practice, and sustained creative engagement.

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