

Exploring TBLT practices in Hong Kong senior secondary school through the framework of intended constructive alignment – evaluating the textbooks and the test tasks

Suet-sin (Kristy) Cheung suet.cheung.18@ucl.ac.uk Supervised by Prof. Andrea Révész & Prof. Amos Paran



Outline of the presentation

- Literature review
- Research questions
- Methodology
- Pilot results from coding the test tasks (RQ1)
- Initial observation from coding the textbook materials (RQ2)
- Intended research contribution
- References



Literature review – TBLT

- TBLT has attracted much attention in the past 20 years (Cook, 2010; East, 2021; Van den Branden, 2006) as it accords well with SLA theories.
- The global uptake of TBLT is ubiquitous, especially in East Asian regions.
- Different strands of TBLT research have been developed.
- Meanwhile, there is a **documented imbalance** in the literature (Erlam and Tolossa, 2022, p.1).
- Practitioners and teacher educators would like to have more empirical support underpinning the basic principles behind TBLT (Van den Branden and Van Gorp, 2021).



Literature review – TBLT in a school setting

• The role of a task and TBLT in a formal curriculum (Long, 2015)

Classroom learning

- A task is a workplan (Ellis, 2003)
- Pre-task, while-task and post-task framework (Willis, 1996)
- Ten methodological principles (Long, 2015)
- A distinction between target tasks and pedagogic tasks.



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Curriculum objectives

- A task syllabus (Long, 2015)
- A hybrid syllabus (Ellis, 2003) or A task-supported syllabus (Samuda and Bygate, 2008)



Literature review – TBLT in a school setting

• The role of a task and TBLT in a formal curriculum (Long, 2015)

Assessment

- Task-based Language Assessment (Brindley, 1994; Norris, 2016)
- Facilitates the alignment of instruction, assessments and interpretation of students' task performances (Van Gorp, 2018)

Classroom learning

- A task is a workplan (Ellis, 2003)
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Literature review – Washback and constructive alignment

Washback (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Cheng, 1997; Watanabe, 2003)

Assessment

Test preparation

Curriculum objectives

- Teachers
- Textbooks

Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 1996)



Context of the present study

The curriculum document is developed by both the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) and Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) (CDC, 2017).



Task-based language assessments (20 years)



Classroom learning

Curriculum objectives

- Teachers
- Textbooks

Intended

Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 1996)

"Adopting a task-based approach which further promotes experiential learning through providing students with a variety of life-wide or cross-curricular learning experiences" (HKEDB, 2017, p.10) Contaxt of the present study

Paper 3

| Compared of the compared of

4-----

Exam-focused, task-based coverage of listening and integrated skills

- Expert analysis of key HKDSE
 Paper 3 skills to provide
 complete exam preparation
- QR codes for students to access the audio files of the teaching part
- **HKDSE-style Exam practice** in each unit, featuring Parts B1 and B2, to consolidate taught skills and task types
- Complete HKDSE-style marking schemes for all Exam practices and Mock Tests

The curriculum document is

Task-based

coverage

(HKEAA) (CDC, 2017).



Curriculum objectives

3iggs, 1996)

"Adopting a task-based approach which further promotes experiential learning through providing students with a variety of life-wide or cross-curricular learning experiences" (HKEDB, 2017, p.10)

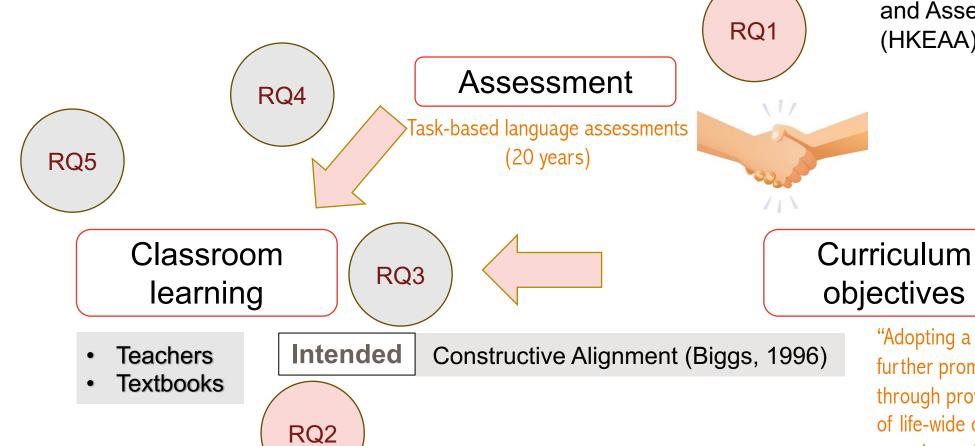


Research questions

- Overarching RQ: What is the degree of alignment between TBLT teaching, pedagogical approaches and assessment design in ESL curriculum of senior secondary education in Hong Kong?
- RQ1: How do integrated tasks in the assessment align with the definition of task in TBLT?
- RQ2: How do the materials designed for teaching integrated tasks align with the methodological principles of TBLT?
- RQ3: How does teachers' instruction in the classroom align with the methodological principles of TBLT?
- RQ4: How is teachers' adoption of TBLT influenced by integrated tasks in the assessment?
- RQ5: What are Hong Kong secondary teachers' perceptions of the assessment?



Context of the present study



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"Adopting a task-based approach which further promotes experiential learning through providing students with a variety of life-wide or cross-curricular learning experiences" (HKEDB, 2017, p.10)



Methodology – A qualitative study (1/3)

Document Analysis (RQ1 & RQ2)

 Integrated tasks in the assessments are coded with task definition to determine how they are aligned with the definition of tasks. Multiple definitions (Breen, 1987; Crookes & Gass, 1993; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989, Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992; Long & Norris, 2000; Prabhu, 1987, Skehan, 1998)

- 1. Does the activity **focus on meaning**?
- 2. Does the activity include **an outcome**? If yes, does the outcome go beyond the use of language?
- 3. To complete the learning activity, do learners need to **fill a gap**? If yes, what kind of gap is it?
- 4. Is there a relationship between **the learning activity and a real-world** activity?



Methodology – A qualitative study (2/3)

Document Analysis (RQ1 & RQ2)

 Tasks and teaching sequences in two textbook series teaching the integrated skill tasks are analysed in through documents analysis.

- Same task definition is used to code the learning activities.
- Three out of ten methodological principles of TBLT (Long, 2015) are chosen as critical methodology principles:
- 1. Use task, not text as a unit of analysis.
- 2. Elaborate input.
- 3. Focus on form.



Methodology – A qualitative study (3/3)

- Lesson observation
- Verbal reports are suitable for eliciting metacognitive roles (Bowles, 2010; Gass & Mackey, 2000)

Stimulated recall (RQ3, RQ4, Think aloud (RQ4) Lesson observations (RQ3) RQ5) A stimulated recall Lesson 1: Teaching with the textbook unit A think-aloud session is session is recorded recorded through zoom through zoom a note of reminding the Lesson 2: Feedback session on the Teachers shown specific participant to think aloud assessment task scenes in their LO will be printed on the videos and their action in teaching materials one of the sessions ~30 minutes Lesson 3: A typical lesson ~30 minutes



Pilot results – RQ 1 test tasks

- What are included in the integrated tasks?
- 1. A data file (including 10-11 pieces of reading texts with various lengths, ranging from instruction emails, whatsapp conversations to posters with figures, a listening note-taking sheet, etc.)



Part B

Situation

You are Gehry Zhang and you work for a property developer called Dragon Peak Properties (DPP). Your boss is Norman Kwok, a publicity and marketing manager. DPP is currently working on two projects: the Jade Islands, which have recently been completed and the Golden Flower Island development, which is in the planning process.

You will now listen to a radio panel show called *Business Matters* with host Charlie Meadows. Appearing on the show are Norman Kwok and Ann Lam from the environmental group Green Treasure.

Before the recording is played, you will have five minutes to study the Question-Answer Book and the Data File to familiarise yourself with the situation and the tasks.

Complete the tasks by following the instructions in the Question-Answer Book and on the recording. You will find all the information you need in the Question-Answer Book, the Data File and on the recording. As you listen, you can make notes on page 3 of the Data File.

You now have five minutes to familiarise yourself with the Question-Answer Book and the Data File.

T (. 11	w .	W H H
Facts.	about	the	Jade	Islands

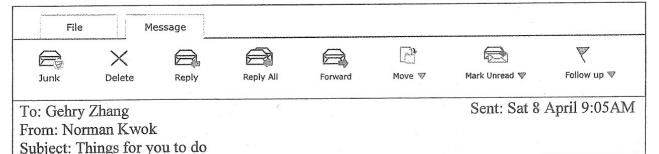
Problems with the Jade Islands

Golden Flower Adventure Mall

Issues concerning Golden Flower Island

Data file content example: Listening note-taking sheet

Email from Norman Kwok to Gehry Zhang, 8 April



Hi Gehry

I need you to write the following for me.

First, as you will remember, I have a follow up meeting with Manu Architects on Monday to provide them with feedback on their initial concept plan for Golden Flower Adventure Mall. I asked our staff to send their comments to you, so you should have received these already. Please prepare a document for me indicating which features our staff say to keep and which not to keep from the initial concept plan. Also, summarise their opinions regarding how they would like to develop the features.

Second, write up an overview of what DPP has done in Hong Kong to protect the environment. Mention our recent achievements and what we are doing to protect the orchids and the butterflies on Golden Flower Island. This will be placed on our webpage in the section "Dragon Peak's Commitment to the Environment in Hong Kong". We want to reassure people that we are an environmentally friendly company.

Third, as a follow up to yesterday's team meeting, write the invitation to Ms. Tse explaining what her role will be and what we would like her to do at the Opening Ceremony. She apparently often rejects invitations like this so you need to mention things that might persuade her to accept. Have a look at her PlinyPedia entry and see if any of her interests or beliefs specifically align with what we are doing.

Thank you for all your hard work.

Regards

Norman

Data file content example: Instruction email from the supervisor assigned in the situation.

- 1. A summary document
- 2. An overview
- 3. An invitation letter



PlinyPedia entry for Mariana Tse

Mariana Tse

Born: 22 June, 1995 (aged 21)

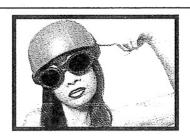
Occupation: singer, musician, actress

Genres: Canto-hop

Years active: 2012 - present

EARLY YEARS DISCOGRAPHY VIEWS & CHARITY WORK

Mariana describes herself as being passionate about protecting the sea. She works for Save Hong Kong Coral Communities as their spokesperson. "We gotta look after the sea and make it clean for all marine life. Come on Big Business, sort it out!" she pleaded in a recent press conference.



CAREER PERSONAL LIFE HOBBIES & INTERESTS

Mariana is a keen swimmer and competed for her high school swimming team including in some high-profile international meets. She also loves snorkelling and diving in the sea. She just loves being up close and personal with all the marine life.

Go on to the next page

Data file content example: Information texts

From: Norman Kwok

Subject: FW: Re: Highland Adventure Centre

Dear Gehry

See my exchange with Alison below. This is pertinent to the document you're preparing for the meeting with Manu Architects next Monday.

Norman

To: Norman Kwok From: Alison Lo

Sent: Wed 5 April 2017 1:56PM Subject: Re: Highland Adventure Centre

Dear Norman

Yes, I heard that a query had been raised on the Business Matters radio show. The solution at the Highland Adventure Centre was quite costly at the time and the centre was closed for six months. Substantial reconstruction work was carried out reducing the waterfall from 45 to 30 metres. At that height, the clouds did not form as they had previously. Since the reopening of the centre, no similar problems have occurred.

By the way, I didn't get round to sending Gehry my recommendations, as I wanted to hear what everybody else was suggesting first. From our team's perspective, all the features proposed in Manu Architects' initial concept plan and in our staff's suggestions are definitely all practical. Nothing that we haven't done before.

Alison Lo Engineering team

To: Alison Lo From: Norman Kwok

Sent: Wed 5 April 2017 1:14PM Subject: Highland Adventure Centre

Dear Alison

As you may have heard I was ambushed by that Ann Lam from Green Treasure on Business Matters on the radio this morning. Such a nasty woman! She was going on about that Highland Adventure Centre in the UK that caused us all the headaches a couple of years back. I remembered that we'd had problems but didn't know the specifics. Can you remember how we resolved the issues?

Norman

k in TBLT?



Data file content example: Email exchanges



Pilot results – test tasks

- What are included in the integrated tasks?
- A data file (including 10-11 pieces of reading texts, ranging from instruction emails, whatsapp conversations, posters with figures to a listening note-taking sheet, etc.)
- 2. A question-answer book where test-takers can write their responses
- A marking scheme that covers content points, language, coherence and organisation and appropriacy
- 4. This kind of writing is defined as writing from sources (Grabe and Zhang, 2013)



Coding the test tasks

	Task definition questions	Test tasks	Evidence
1	Does the activity focus on meaning ?	Yes	Content points are elicited and candidates need to be able to identify them and include them
2	Does the activity include an outcome?	Yes	3 writing tasks
	If yes, does the outcome go beyond the use of language?	Yes	?
3	To complete the learning activity, do learners need to fill a gap ?	Yes	There is a need for the writer to convey meaning when writing. And the need is clearly defined.
4	Is there a relationship between the learning activity and a real-world activity? Are they situational authenticity or interactional authenticity?	Yes	Both situational authenticity and interactional authenticity could be observed.



Coding the test tasks

	Task definition questions	asks	Evidence
1	Does the activity focus on meaning		Content points were elicited and candidates need to be able to pick them and include them
2	Does the activity include an ou		3 writing tasks
	If yes, does the outcome go be		?
3	To complete the learning activity, gap?		There is a need for the writer to convey meaning when write. And the need is clearly defined.
4	Is there a relationship between the learning real-world activity? Are they situational authenticity or interactional authenticity? Yes		Both situational authenticity and interactional authenticity could be observed.



Overall findings for RQ1:

• An overall analysis of the test tasks from 2012 to 2022 (11 years) found that all the test tasks (66) are aligned with the definition of a task.

• Among these, 11 tasks doesn't require learners to complete a complete

text.

• The categories of the test tasks are presented.

	Text types	Count
•	Email	15
•	Article	8
•	Report	7
•	Letter	6
•	Speech	4
•	Script	2
•	Announcement	2
•	Webpage	2
•	Biography	2
•	Advice page	2
•	Description	1
•	Programme	1
•	Summary	1
•	Editorial	1
•	Introduction paragraph	1
	Total	55



Reflection on the test task coding

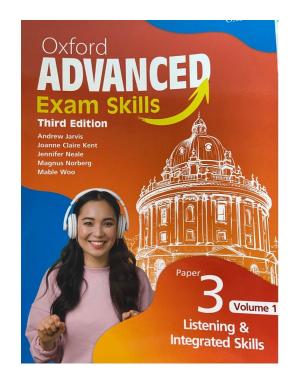
- The coding does not differentiate integrated writing task from writing tasks.
- Washback created by writing task might not be the same as integrated task, as the test formats are different (Alderson and Wall, 1993)
- Understanding the test-taking procedures when test takers or proficient English users completing the tasks might shed light on the sub-skills that are required in these test tasks.

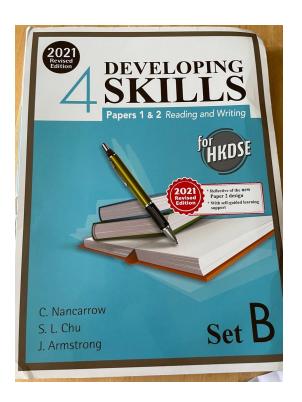


Pilot results – Textbook materials

What do I have as data?

Two skill books series targeting integrated skills in the exam.







Pilot results – Textbook materials

What do I have as data?

- Two skill books series targeting integrated skills in the exam.
- Supplementary materials including exam boosters, audio files with various speed, etc.

What is the coding framework?

- Three-level framework by Littlejohn (1998, 2011)
- Level 1: What is there?
- Level 2: What is required of users?
- Level 3: What is implied?
- Further questions specifying Long's (2015) methodological principles are asked when coding as well.



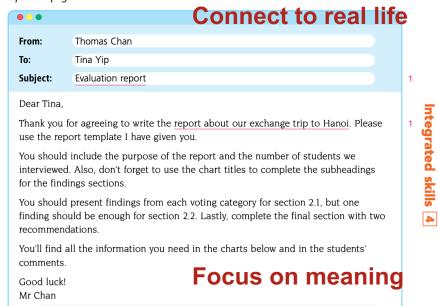
Initial observation – Textbook materials

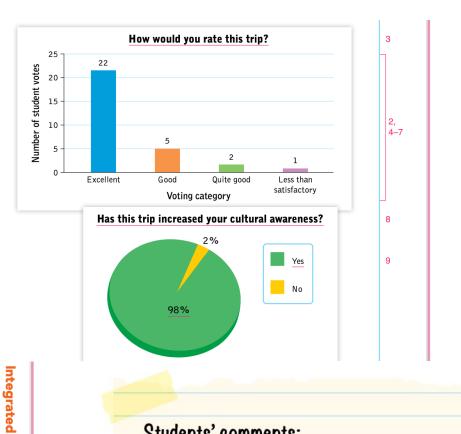
Unit 5 Culture vultures

skills

Elements of tasks and teaching suggestions aligning with task principles were observed.

BS You are Tina. You were one of the participants on an overseas cultural exchange trip organized by your school. You are now helping Mr Chan complete a report to evaluate the trip. Read Mr Chan's email, the two charts and the students' comments, then write the report on page 156.





Students' comments:

- not much information given before leaving; suggest giving more (e.g. things to take)
- give more free time; the schedule was packed!



Initial observation – Textbook materials

Elaborate input

- Elements of tasks and teaching suggestions aligning with task principles were observed.
- Text type features are also explicitly explained.
- A pre-task stage is offered, but they might not be focusing on providing language support (Willis & Willis, 2007), exam strategies are explained instead.

Check your notes against the tapescripts if you are not sure. Make changes to your notes if necessary.

Mavis: By the way, Gareth, have you heard about the new school club that's starting up, the Chillax Club? It sounds like just the thing for you. Rather than organizing activities and running around playing sports, it's all about taking it easy.

Gareth: The Chillax Club? As in chill' and 'relax'? That does sound like my kind of thing—because I really do enjoy taking it easy. But what'll they do exactly? Just get together and sleep?

Mavis: Well, apparently they've been given an empty classroom—Room 201— and they've filled it with comfy sofas and video games consoles and stuff like that. They've even installed mood lighting.

Unit 1 School life is golden

Gareth: Mood lighting? You mean lights that can be turned up or down?

Mavis: Yes, and they can even change colour!

les All answers

Gareth: Well, as long as they don't flash, I suppose—that wouldn't be very

relaxing! So any idea how I can sign up?

Mayis: Yes you can talk to Victor in Class 4D. He's the chairnerson of the club



Initial observation – Textbook materials

- Elements of tasks and teaching suggestions aligning with task principles were observed.
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Integrated skills 4 • Ex **Writing reports** pre Information presented in reports needs to be well-structured and clear. The language used in reports is formal and concise. Reports usually present new findings and often give recommendations. Headings for each Report on young people's views on cultural activities Descriptive title section are often numbered 1. Background Introduction: The purpose of this report was to discover young people's views towards cultural Explain the purpose activities in Hong Kong. A total of 32 people between the ages of 15 and 25 of the report. You were interviewed. Among the interviewees, 17 were female and 15 were male. can also explain Passive voice to describe how the data was 2. Findings methodology obtained. 2.1 Number of cultural activities Body: Present the Just over half of the respondents thought that there were not enough cultural key findings. The activities for young people in Hong Kong. information should Synonyms (e.g. interviewees, be clear and easy 2.2 International cultural events for the reader to The majority of these youngsters said that Hong Kong needed more international understand. Do not cultural shows and exhibitions. add any personal comments or 3. Conclusion and recommendations opinions. It can be concluded that young people in Hong Kong would like to have Conclusion: End more cultural activities to enjoy, especially international events. In terms of with a conclusion recommendations, tourist organizations could host more international cultural that summarizes events in Hong Kong. Also, schools could organize more cultural events to enable the main issues busy students to develop their cultural awareness and understanding of the world. and suggests appropriate action for the future. Reports typically use: The purpose of the report was to ... an impersonal and objective tone This report presents the results of ... According to our research, ... Based on our findings. ... subheadings to divide sections Introduction Background Purpose

Methodology

Summary

Findings

clearly

RQ2: How do the materials designed for teaching integrated tasks align with the methodological principles.

of TBLT?

Initial observation – Te

- Elements of tasks and teaching suggestions aligning with task principles were observed.
- Text type features are also explicitly explained.
- A pre-task stage is offered, but they might not be focusing on providing language support (Willis & Willis, 2007), exam strategies are explained instead.

Progress check

C1 Read the following situation.

Situation

You are Rebecca Lee. You are a member of the Student Union at St Judith's Secondary School. The chairperson, Joshua Fung, has asked you to help organize a sharing session with a very special guest speaker.

You will now listen to a conversation you had with Joshua about the upcoming sharing session.

Before the recording is played, you will have two minutes to study the task and the Data File.



C2 You will have two minutes to study the task. During these two minutes, do the following:

- **1** Skim the Data File items on pages 19 and 20 to get a better idea of what the task is about.
- 2 Skim the flyer outline on page 21. This is where you will be writing your answer.
- Pay attention to the headings in the outline that tell you what specific information you need to provide in your answer.
- **4** Scan the Data File items for this specific information. If you find any of the information, <u>underline it.</u> If you do not find it, you will have to listen carefully for it in the recording.



C3 The recording is about to begin. Turn to page 19 and make notes on the listening note-taking sheet as you listen. Then read the email and the voice message on page 20 and complete the fiver on page 21



Intended research contribution

- To fill in the current gap of how TBLT summative assessments influence practical teaching
- To develop a framework on the evaluation of summative integrated taskbased assessments
- To shed light on whether it is possible to use standardised task-based assessments for constructive alignment



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Thank you!



Long's Methodological principles (2015)

	Methodological principles						
Activities	1. Use tasks, not texts, as the unit of analysis *						
	2. Promote learning by doing						
Input	3. Elaborate input *						
	4. Provide rich (not impoverished) input						
Learning	5. Encourage inductive ("chunk") learning						
process	6. Focus on form*						
	7. Provide negative feedback						
	8. Respect learner syllabi and developmental process						
	9. Promote cooperative learning						
Learners	10. Individualise instruction						

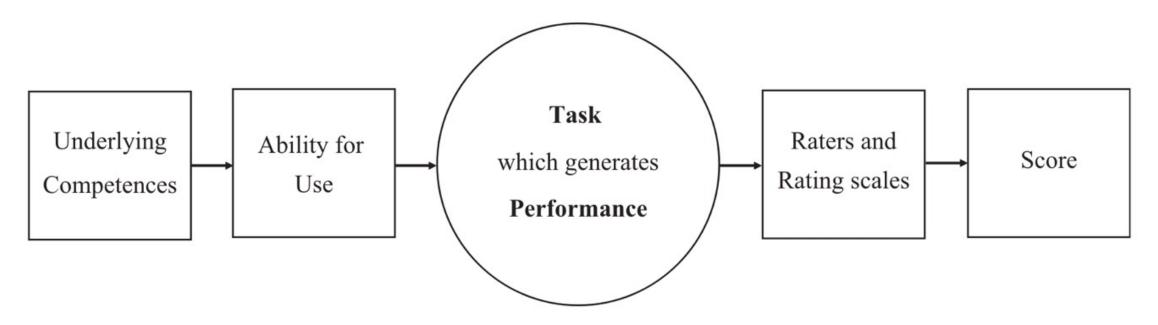


Literature review (1) - What is a task?

Multiple definitions (Breen, 1987; Crookes & Gass, 1993; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989, Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992; Long & Norris, 2000; Prabhu, 1987, Skehan, 1998)

	Focus on meaning	Real-world activity	An outcome	A gap	Learners' own resources	A goal
Long (1985)		✓				
Skehan (1998)	✓	✓	✓			√
Ellis (2003)	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Ellis and Shintani (2012)	✓		√ *	✓	✓	
East (2021)	✓	✓	√ *	✓		





An outline model for task-based testing (Ellis et al, 2019, p.245)

Task-based language assessment



Strengths and weaknesses of Task-based assessments

- Improves the effectiveness of feedback (Norris, 2016)
- Improves learners' communicative performances (Brindley, 1994)
- Facilitates the alignment of instruction, assessments and interpretation of students' task performances (Van Gorp, 2018)

- Generalisability
- Fairness issues caused by the choice of the tasks



	Re	search Questions		search ticipant	Methodology	Re	esults
Carless (2004)	1. 2.	What are teachers' attitudes and understandings towards task-based teaching? How do teachers attempt to implement task-based teaching and what issues emerge from these attempts?	•	3 Primar y Ts	Classroom observation Interviews	•	Participating teachers adopted an abridged version of TBLT They thought that they had to balance TBLT with the use of the mother tongue, discipline problems and a lack of target language production
Carless (2007)	1. 2.	How suitable is TBLT for secondary schools in Hong Kong? What adaptations might make it more feasible to implement?	•	Secon dary Ts	Semi- structured interviews	•	Teachers criticised TBLT for its rigidity and lack of flexibility, pointing out it was time-consuming and difficult for them to fit tasks into their teaching schedules. They preferred direct grammar instruction, saying it was needed as they viewed grammar as the key focus of teaching.
Carless (2009)	2.	What do informants see as the potential relative advantages of TBLT and P-P-P? What are the main reasons for informants' preferences for TBLT or P-P-P?	•	Secon dary Ts 10 T educat ors	Interviews	•	Only three teachers favoured TBLT. Six out of the remaining nine teachers preferred P-P-P over TBLT and three of them had no specific preference. Teachers were worried that tasks could not promote learners' grammar learning. Teachers acknowledged that tasks could motivate learners. But they were unsure about learning outcomes.

Chan (2014)	 2. 3. 	What are the language teaching beliefs of Hong Kong secondary school English teachers? How is TBLT implemented in Hong Kong secondary school English classrooms? How do the language teaching beliefs held by Hong Kong secondary school English teachers influence their pedagogical practices?	•	10 Secon dary Ts	cas	ollective se study: in-depth interview s Classroo m observati on Documen t analysis		Teachers were not entirely convinced by the advantages that TBLT could bring to the classroom as there was a gap between ELT teachers' beliefs and TBLT principles. There might be a gap in teachers' understanding of TBLT as they interpreted TBLT as using oral activities and authentic learning materials in the classrooms. Some teachers were implementing task-based language teaching with assistance from other teaching methods.
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