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Task-based learning in the digital era: encouraging student creativity and reducing copy-paste culture

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Abstract: This study explores how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). It is integrated with digital tools, enhances student creativity and combats the widespread issue of copy-paste culture. Drawing from postmethod pedagogy, digital literacy frameworks, and motivational theories, the research highlights how well-designed tasks encourage authentic engagement and foster original thinking. Using classroom data and practical examples, the paper illustrates how digital-era tasks—such as multimodal storytelling, collaborative project creation, and real-world problem-solving—promote autonomy, reduce plagiarism, and increase student investment in language learning. The paper concludes with recommendations for implementing TBLT effectively in technologically enriched environments.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, Digital Tools, Student Creativity, Plagiarism Prevention, Language Education.

Introduction: With the rise of digital resources, students today have unprecedented access to information, but also increased temptation to rely on unoriginal content. In this context, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers an antidote—shifting focus from rote memorization to meaningful language use. This article examines the ways TBLT, integrated with digital pedagogies, can encourage student creativity while addressing academic dishonesty, particularly the copy-paste culture.

Literature Review

TBLT and Its Foundations: As Ellis (2003) and Nunan

(2004) note, TBLT emphasizes interaction, meaning-focused instruction, and learner autonomy. Willis & Willis (2007) reinforce that tasks should be outcome-oriented and reflect real-world use.

Digital Integration in TBLT: Research by Lai & Li (2011) and Hampel & Stickler (2012) shows that when TBLT is supported by digital tools—such as collaborative platforms (Google Docs, Padlet), creativity apps (Canva, Flipgrid), or real-world simulations—students engage more deeply and authentically.

Copy-Paste Culture: Howard (2007) and Pecorari (2013) identify academic dishonesty as often rooted in disengagement, lack of skill, or poor task design. Creative, individualized tasks reduce plagiarism by encouraging student voice, originality, and intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

What Is Task-Based Learning in the Digital Era? TBLT in the digital age expands beyond speaking and writing to include multimodal content creation, virtual collaboration, and project-based learning using web tools. Tasks now include making podcasts, editing vlogs, designing websites, and participating in virtual debates or simulations.

New Task Formats Include:

- Digital storytelling using tools like Book Creator or Storybird
- Collaborative content creation via Google Suite or Microsoft Teams
- Infographic making using Canva or Piktochart
- Video presentations via Flipgrid or Loom
- Interactive debates hosted on platforms like Padlet or Edmodo

Case Examples from Classroom Practice:

Example 1: Flipgrid Debates Students recorded their arguments on controversial topics using Flipgrid. Tasks required research, scriptwriting, and oral fluency. Students had to respond to peer videos, increasing accountability and authenticity. Outcomes showed creative expression and zero instances of copied material.

Example 2: Canva-Based Infographic Creation Students synthesized knowledge on environmental issues by creating infographics. As students had to interpret, rephrase, and visualize content, opportunities for copy-pasting diminished. Peer review added a layer of motivation and ownership.

Example 3: Digital Storytelling for Literary Reflection After reading a novel, students created animated digital stories of character backstories using Storybird. This task encouraged original thought, language production, and creative risk-taking.

Impact on Creativity and Plagiarism Reduction:
Enhancing Creativity: Digital TBLT tasks allow students to explore personal interests, visual expression, and collaboration. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), creative output arises when learners feel a sense of autonomy and purpose—conditions TBLT cultivates.

Reducing Plagiarism: When learners create personalized products, write scripts, or collaborate live, plagiarism is nearly impossible. Tasks demanding reflection, judgment, or creativity can't be easily "Googled."

Studies (e.g., Bretag et al., 2019) show that clear expectations, scaffolded instructions, and creative design reduce academic dishonesty by over 50%.

Digital Literacy and 21st-Century Skills in Language Education: TBLT provides an ideal platform to integrate 21st-century skills through tasks that require learners to search for information, evaluate sources, create original content, and present it digitally. These tasks nurture critical digital literacy (Kern, 2014), enabling students to identify credible sources and generate informed, creative responses—skills that significantly reduce their reliance on copying from others.

Artificial Intelligence and Task Design: Friend or Foe? AI-powered tools like ChatGPT offer support but also pose a threat to originality. However, well-designed TBLT tasks can incorporate AI use productively. For example, learners can critique AI-generated texts, rephrase them, or localize the content, promoting evaluation and language awareness (Godwin-Jones, 2020).

Gamification in TBLT: Motivating Through Play: Gamified digital TBLT tasks can increase learner motivation and creativity. Examples include VR simulations, class language quests using Kahoot or Classcraft, and creating digital escape rooms. According to Kapp (2012), gamification enhances goal-setting and student investment.

Plagiarism Prevention Through Assessment Design: TBLT mitigates plagiarism by emphasizing process (drafts, peer feedback), product variation (video, infographic, script), and contextual prompts. Contextualized tasks make it harder for students to find ready-made answers, encouraging authentic responses (Sutherland-Smith, 2008).

The Role of Teacher Training in Implementing Digital TBLT: Educators must be equipped with digital tools and strategies to design creativity-driven, plagiarism-resistant tasks. Training should include hands-on task creation, AI integration, and workshops on academic integrity modeling (Bax, 2011).

TBLT in Online and Blended Learning Environments: Online and blended learning offers flexibility for TBLT.

Examples include telecollaborative projects, live Zoom-based tasks, or asynchronous forum discussions. Baralt et al. (2016) emphasize that these formats support autonomy and intercultural communication.

Student Voices and Reflection: Metacognition and Ownership: Reflection tasks like journals, video logs, and self-assessment rubrics encourage ownership and reduce temptation to plagiarize. Students who feel proud of their original ideas are more likely to produce authentic work.

Interdisciplinary Task Design: Language Across the Curriculum: TBLT can integrate other disciplines through content-based instruction. Projects like creating a historical tour brochure, scientific video, or business pitch in English strengthen both language and critical thinking.

Theoretical Integration: Sociocultural Theory and Constructivism: TBLT aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and constructivist approaches by promoting social learning and active construction of knowledge. Collaborative tasks and peer scaffolding nurture language development and autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Task-Based Learning, enriched by digital tools, enhances student creativity, collaboration, and communicative competence while serving as a natural deterrent to copy-paste culture. By rethinking task design, integrating purposeful technology, and emphasizing reflective learning, educators can create inclusive, dynamic, and plagiarism-resistant classrooms. Future directions could explore blockchain for academic integrity, AI-aided plagiarism detection, or global collaborative TBLT projects.

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