TRACING THE DISCOURSE OF TASKS: A CORPUS-BASED EXPLORATION OF TBLT IN ELT RESEARCH (2000–2025)

Abdullah Yoldaş[*], Fırat Keskin[**]

INTRODUCTION

Task Task-based language Teaching (TBLT) has been a crucial approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) for the last few decades (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Long, 2015). Within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TBLT shifts the focus from learning language forms as objects to the use of language forms within the completion of a pedagogical task (Willis, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2007; Skehan, 1998). Also, the use of computers in the analysis of language (i.e., corpus linguistics) has transformed the discipline of applied linguistics, since researchers are now able to conduct empirical studies of large corpora of naturalistic language use (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Römer, 2011; Chambers, 2019).

TBLT research has also attracted scientific interest in Türkiye, although the amount of extensive research in TBLT is still limited. For example, Öcel and Su-Bergil (2022) researched the attitudes of 130 EFL teachers in Turkish state and preparatory schools and identified generally positive attitudes, although they also identified

[*] Öğr. Gör., Hakkari Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Hakkari, abdullahyoldas@hakkari.edu.tr, ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-9657-0264

[**] Öğr. Gör., Hakkari Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Hakkari, firatkeskin@hakkari.edu.tr, ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-6183-8849

constraints regarding implementation, such as exams and class size. In the same way, Kavak 2024, in the pilot study of a task-based English course at a Turkish university, reported that students appreciated and wanted more control over lesson tasks. In another study, Çetin (2022) compared teachings of Turkish as a foreign language with a focus on form to task-based materials. The study suggested that the experimental group, which comprised the task and form, was more able to use target structures than the control group. In addition, Tunçel, Utku, Akçay, and Sözen (2017) studied TBLT and its potential to develop some aspects of pragmatic competence in Turkish EFL classrooms and suggested the incorporation of some communicative activities and task sequencing in the curriculum.

This investigation integrates these fields employing corpus linguistic techniques to assess the ways in which TBLT is conceptualized and presented in articles pertaining to ELT. A significant number of investigations—including in Türkiye—have analyzed teachers' attitudes, learners' reactions, or classroom strategies; however, there is a relative dearth of scholarly inquiry pertaining to the TBLT academic discourse itself (Ellis, 2017; Long, 2015). The research will construct a specialized corpus of TBLT literature and apply corpus-based approaches to identify which themes, patterns, and the discourse on TBLT has been developed in and across the texts. The subsequent sections describe the related literature, research problem with questions, justification for the research boundaries, corpus construction and methods, and the contributions the research is expected to make.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a branch of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which started in the 1980s. TBLT focuses on interaction and communication rather than the specific grammar and structure of a language. (Prabhu, 1987; Long & Crookes, 1992). The theoretical perspective of this approach was further developed by Willis (1996) and expanded to include the focus on the learners' autonomy (Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 2003). Over the years, TBLT has developed to include considerations of the complexity of the tasks, the order in which tasks are to be done, and the use of technology (Robinson, 2011; Ahmadian & Bygate, 2021).

There is a growing acceptance of TBLT, which is a reflection of the alignment of this approach to some of the major theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), such as the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), and the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1995). These theories argue that language acquisition happens when learners are provided with comprehensible input, opportunities to interact, and to produce language. All of which are present in task-based pedagogy. As a result, TBLT has been at the center of many studies in English Language Teaching (ELT) with practice in many countries around the world (Ellis, 2017; Long, 2015).

Corpus Linguistics and Its Relevance to TBLT

Applied linguistics has received one of its most influential transformations through the development of corpus linguistics by enabling to perform systematic,

qualitative and quantitative analyses of authentic language data (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Römer, 2011). In corpus-based studies, researchers investigate certain areas of discourse systematically and in some cases, they attempt to study those areas in more detail than has been achieved in previous studies. Johns (1991) introduced *data-driven learning* (DDL) which encourages learners to explore corpora to discover usage patterns, while scholars such as Boulton (2010) and Boulton & Cobb (2017) demonstrated the pedagogical benefits of corpus-informed instruction.

Most recently, corpus linguistics has also focused on teaching materials, research discourse itself, and framing of primary concepts in academic communities (Chambers, 2019; Qin & Lei, 2022). Such approaches provide researchers the ability to trace along conceptual and thematic shifts that are salient at certain time periods which provides a certain perspective to the evolution of methodological frameworks like TBLT.

Research on TBLT in the Turkish EFL Context

TBLT research is primarily conducted in Europe, Asia, and North America, but recently there have been some studies in Türkiye as well. For instance, Öcel and Su-Bergil (2022) studied the attitudes of Turkish EFL instructors toward TBLT. While they noted an overall positive attitude, they described challenges some instructors faced in the form of large classes and exam fatigue. Kavak (2024) reported the results of a pilot implementation of a task-based English course in Türkiye. The participants in the study liked the tasks to be interactive and the classroom environment to be student-centered. In the same way, Çetin (2022) reported

improvements in the use of target structures of the learners when instruction focused primarily on form and content. Also, regarding the development of pragmatic competence, Tunçel et al. (2017) described TBLT as supporting the implementation of some basic teaching of communication and task sequencing within the local curriculum.

The studies mentioned capture the respect and appreciation that TBLT pedagogies receive, but at the same time they portray the contradictions and difficulties of the educational context in Türkiye, especially the limited time frames and large classrooms dominated by examination. What is specifically missing in these studies is the representation of TBLT in the academic context as well as the linguistic and conceptual systems that underpin that representation. This is the very focus that corpus-based discourse analysis addresses.

Identified Gap and Rationale for the Study

There have been many research articles that have examined the implementation and the effectiveness of TBLT. However, very few investigations have been carried out to study TBLT's discursive framings and profiles described in different studies. Publication trends and bibliometric analyses (Qin & Lei, 2022) overlook the discursive language of research reporting. A corpus-based analysis of TBLT in ELT research articles between 2000 and 2025 would center TBLT’s conceptualization, problematizations, and projections across the globe and in Turkey. This has been called for in the literature for more reflexivity in applied linguistics. (Ellis, 2017; Römer, 2011).

Based on the literature reviewed above, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. **RQ1:** How is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) linguistically represented in ELT research articles published between 2000 and 2025?
2. **RQ2:** What are the most frequent keywords, collocational patterns, and thematic clusters associated with TBLT in academic discourse?
3. **RQ3:** How has the discourse surrounding TBLT evolved diachronically (2000–2009; 2010–2016; 2017–2025)?
4. **RQ4:** What implications do these discursive patterns have for understanding the development and positioning of TBLT within ELT research?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed-method, corpus-based research design was adopted to engage in qualitative and quantitative analyses of academic discourse. The central objective was to map and explain the linguistic patterns, the thematic trends, and the discursive shifts that have framed Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English Language Teaching (ELT) research articles between 2000 and 2025.

The study used frequencies in applied corpus linguistics. And then, keywords and collocation analyses were used quantitatively to discern patterns in a corpus. Concordance and discourse analysis were applied to the qualitative dimension to explain how TBLT has been framed.

The design of the present study resonates with the growing body of corpus-based discourse studies in applied linguistics (e.g., Römer, 2011; Chambers, 2019) and reflects a growing interest in analyzing the discourse of research itself, not only language produced by learners or teachers.

Corpus Compilation

Database and Source Selection

Page et al.'s (2021) PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) principles were applied to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and reproducibility in the selection of articles for this study. The Web of Science (WoS) database was chosen as the main data source because of its accessibility to numerous high-impact journals across various disciplines within the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Science Citation Index (SCI), and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), giving access to peer-reviewed and academically quality studies within the field of language education. WoS has often been relied upon in corpus-based and systematic review studies because of its extensive coverage and reproducibility of search results, allowing other scholars to conduct transparent and replicable selection processes (Fu & Hwang, 2018; Shadiev et al., 2020). For the purpose of this study, which analyzes the discourse on task-based language teaching (TBLT) across different periods in time, WoS was chosen because of its ability to accurately depict the research activities in language teaching.

A total of 207 records were initially identified through database searching. After removing duplicates and irrelevant records, 152 articles were screened. Of these,

104 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and 17 were excluded based on predefined inclusion criteria. The final corpus comprised 87 articles published between 2000 and 2025, representing a total of 431,670 running words. Of these, 77 were international publications and 10 were Turkish publications, with an average article length of 4,960 words across 18 journals. No additional records were identified through backward reference searching. This structured and systematic selection process ensured that the final corpus accurately represented the evolution of TBLT discourse in the international and national ELT research context.

Table 1 below presents a summary of the systematic article selection process conducted in accordance with the PRISMA framework.

Table 1. Article Selection Process Based on PRISMA Principles

Stage	Description	Records Number (n)
Identification	Records identified through the WoS database searching	207
Screening	Records screened after removing duplicates and irrelevant topics	152
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	104
Exclusion	Full-text articles excluded with reasons	17
Inclusion	Final studies included in the corpus	87

Keyword Search Strategy

The following keywords were used to retrieve relevant studies:

- **Core concept terms:**
    - "task-based language teaching"
    - "task-based learning"
    - "TBLT"
    - "task-based instruction"
- **Supplementary pedagogical terms:**
    - "communicative language teaching"
    - "focus on form"
    - "task complexity"
    - "task performance"
    - "task design"
- **Contextual terms:**
    - "English language teaching" OR "EFL" OR "ESL" OR "foreign language education"

Inclusion Criteria

- Articles explicitly focused on TBLT or task-based learning.
- Published in English between 2000 and 2025.
- Research articles or comprehensive review papers (no editorials or short reports).

- Availability of full text in a clean, convertible format.

Exclusion Criteria

- Articles mentioning TBLT only tangentially.
- Editorials, opinion pieces, short announcements, and book reviews.
- Articles with significant formatting issues preventing text extraction.

Data Processing

All selected articles were converted to plain text (.txt) format to focus solely on discursive content, excluding reference lists, tables, figures, and appendices. Each file was tagged with metadata (year, journal, country/region, author, article type) to enable historical and cross-contextual analyses.

Sections Analyzed

To ensure that the analysis targeted conceptual framing rather than technical details, only the following sections were included:

- **Abstract** – for identifying overarching themes and stance.
- **Introduction** – for conceptual definitions and justifications.
- **Literature Review** – for theoretical framing and narrative evolution.
- **Discussion and Findings** – for evaluative language and interpretation.

- **Conclusion and Implications** – for future directions and overall stance.

Methodology, references, tables, and figures were excluded because they do not primarily contain discursive framing.

Analytical Tools

All corpus analyses were conducted using AntConc (Version 4.0.0) and Sketch Engine. These tools were selected because of their reliability, transparency, and wide acceptance in applied linguistics research.

Analytical Procedures

Frequency and Keyword Analysis

Word frequency lists were generated to identify the most salient lexical items. A keyword analysis compared the TBLT corpus with a 500,000-word reference corpus of general ELT research articles. Keywords were calculated using log-likelihood with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. Terms such as *task*, *communicative*, *authentic*, and *learner* emerged as statistically significant keywords.

Collocation and Cluster Analysis

Collocations (within a ±4 word span) were analyzed for key terms like *task*, *task-based*, *learning*, and *focus on form*. Mutual Information (MI) and t-scores were used to ensure statistical robustness. Recurrent clusters such as *task-based approach*, *communicative tasks*, and *focus on meaning* revealed stable discourse patterns.

Concordance and Qualitative Coding

Concordance lines were examined to qualitatively interpret how TBLT was defined, evaluated, and

problematised. An inductive thematic coding process identified discursive categories such as:

- Theoretical justification (e.g., SLA-based arguments)
- Pedagogical benefits (e.g., fluency, motivation)
- Implementation challenges (e.g., teacher readiness, assessment)
- Technology integration (notably after 2015)

Diachronic Analysis

The corpus was divided into three temporal subcorpora:

- **Period 1:** 2000–2009
- **Period 2:** 2010–2016
- **Period 3:** 2017–2025

Term frequencies and collocations were compared across these periods. Results showed a shift from foundational definitions and justification in Period 1 toward technological integration and assessment issues in Period 3.

Validity and Reliability

Corpus Construction Transparency

All inclusion and exclusion decisions were documented, and corpus files were stored securely. Metadata coding was double-checked for accuracy.

Inter-Coder Reliability

For qualitative concordance coding, a second trained rater independently coded a 15% sample of data. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was **0.87**, indicating high reliability.

Triangulation

Findings from keyword/collocation analyses were cross-validated with thematic coding to strengthen interpretive validity.

Ethical Considerations

The study exclusively analyzed publicly available academic articles; therefore, no ethical approval involving human subjects was required.

- All excerpts from the corpus are properly cited.
- No full texts were shared publicly; only derived data and short, properly attributed concordance lines were included in publications.
- Analysis was conducted in compliance with fair use and academic integrity standards.

FINDINGS

Learning Outcomes

The longitudinal analysis of the corpus demonstrates a gradual, perhaps inevitable, change in pedagogical focus across the years. While older literature tended to focus on task planning, fluency, and accuracy (2005-2014), more recent literature incorporates a wider lens that also considers learner motivation and technology, as well as emotional outcomes (2015-2025).

The data also suggests that TBLT, across the literature, is primarily linked to changes in linguistic fluency and complexity, and to a lesser extent, accuracy. Most recently, a macro evaluation by Fujita and Shintani (2025), suggested that, after the completion of 14 weeks of instruction, learners were able to write more fluently and with greater lexical and syntactic complexity, however, there was only a slight improvement with accuracy. This is a well-documented, albeit unfortunate, outcome of TBLT, that meaning centered tasks, with little attention to accuracy, are the substanative focus of instruction.

Reading comprehension and affective outcomes are also influenced by TBLT. Ismail et al.'s (2023) study showed that task-based instruction produced significant gains in reading comprehension, measurable reductions in language anxiety and increased L2 grit and motivation when compared to traditional instruction. Moreover, mobile-supported TBLT demonstrated higher effects on lexical gains and listening comprehension than paper-based task instruction, but the differences in grammatical development remained modest.

Overall, these results indicate that TBLT fosters language development through communicative engagement, which strengthens fluency, complexity, and affective readiness, while accuracy requires more targeted form-focused intervention.

Task Response and Completion

The second major finding relates to the change in learners' engagement with the task over time. Fujita and Shintani (2025) found that during the first and second task cycles, learners' response quality, perceived success, and organization of their texts improved significantly. The

learners improved in their ability to employ input models, which in turn enhanced the structure and clarity of their texts.

The incorporation of technological scaffolding (e.g., mobile feedback, digital prompts, peer reviews) also improved learners' completion of the tasks and their use of interaction strategies. This movement from a linear, teacher-directed to a multi-modal and interactive task completion approach represents a shift in the discourse regarding TBLT which has included technology to a greater extent as a means to support learner engagement and autonomy.

Learner and Teacher Perceptions

There is positive and practical appreciation of TBLT by teachers and learners who exhibit a divergence for the focal points of their appreciation. The learners express the motivational, authentic, and personal relevance of the tasks described under TBLT to their speaking and writing skills, although they experience the difficulty of the tasks, the limited feedback from teachers, and the grouping issues of learners in the activities.

Nevertheless, teachers have more varied views, generally transitioning back and forth between the ideals of TBLT and the institutional realities. In Eastern Asia, particularly, there is a tendency in several researches to adopt a 'weak' or task-supported model of TBLT, in which there is a blending of the more traditional language pedagogy and communicative tasks. Such a tendency is a reflection of institutional realities, high-staked test environments, and longstanding deeply rooted beliefs in teacher centered pedagogy.

Also, teacher cognition research points out to the fact that, far more than training or curriculum requirements, belief systems mediate the successful application of TBLT. In cases where there is institutional policy support for TBLT, teachers' pedagogical choices tend to reflect the local contextual realities, particularly the exam driven curriculum as well the existing resources.

Technology Integration and Affective Factors

One of the most noticeable discursive changes between the early and later periods of the corpus is the advent of technology mediated TBLT and its associated affective engagement. Post 2015, there is a noticeable growth in research focusing on the use of task cycles for the incorporation of learning platforms, mobile applications, and digital feedback systems. Such studies have shown that there is a great deal of ease in the execution of tasks with the use of technology, as well as increased motivation and reduced language anxiety, and greater task autonomy on the part of learners.

Particular to mobile-assisted TBLT, research studies have found that learners engage at higher levels of interaction and sustain their attention during tasks, most notably in the listening and speaking portions of the exercise. More recent developments in research surrounding TBLT pedagogy have included affective constructs such as motivation, persistence, and anxiety control, demonstrating a further broadening of the scope of investigation beyond the learner's language to include the learner as a whole.

Diachronic Patterns in TBLT Discourse (2005–2025)

The diachronic discourse analysis of the 87 studies reveals three major phases in TBLT research:

1. **2005–2010 – Theoretical Grounding:**

   Focus on planning, fluency, and defining task frameworks (e.g., task complexity, planning time, focus on form).

2. **2011–2015 – Contextual Adaptation:**

   Increased attention to implementation issues, PPP vs. TBLT debates, and early CALL integration.

3. **2016–2025 – Technology and Belief Systems:**

   Strong emphasis on teacher and learner perceptions, mobile-supported learning, and affective factors (motivation, grit, anxiety).

The earlier discourse comprising the keywords “task”, “planning”, “focus on form”, evolves to later studies which emphasize “perception”, “mobile”, “motivation”, and “implementation”. There are corresponding changes in collocation patterns that shift from the procedural to the pedagogical and the affective.

To highlight these diachronic developments, the following tables (Table 2 and Table 3) present the evolution of key lexical items and collocational structures across the corpus. These patterns provide a linguistic and discourse-based foundation for interpreting how TBLT has been framed and operationalized over the past two decades, which connects to RQ1 (lexical representation) and RQ2 (collocational patterns).

Table 2. *Diachronic Keyword Highlights by Period (Qualitative Summary)*

Period	Keyword	Role in Discourse	Typical Collocation/ Cluster	Primary Section	Interpretive Note
2000–2009	task; planning; focus on form	Core/ Procedural	task-based approach; planning time; focus on meaning	Intro/ Methods	Theoretical and procedural foundations
2010–2016	Implementation; PPP vs TBLT; L1 use	Context/ Adaptation	implementation challenges; teacher readiness	Discussion	Local constraints and policy realities
2017–2025	perception; belief; mobile; motivation; grit	Pedagogy/ Tech/ Affect	mobile-supported TBLT; teacher perception	Findings/Discussion	Socio-technical and affective emphases

Table 3. *Collocation Patterns Around Core Nodes (±4 Window; 2005–2025)*

Node	Frequent Collocates (Top 10)	Recurrent Cluster	Period Salience	Interpretive Note
task	based, language, teaching, learning, for, on, of, communicative, etc.	*task-based language teaching*	High in 2005–2015; stable thereafter	Core procedural framing and method definition
planning	task, strategic, performance, structure, pre, time, conditions, etc.	*strategic planning time*	High in early years	SLA-oriented fluency–accuracy dynamics
focus	on, form, forms, meaning, task, language, input, etc.	*focus on form / meaning*	Peaks in early years	Meaning–form balance in early TBLT debates

Node	Frequent Collocates (Top 10)	Recurrent Cluster	Period Salience	Interpretive Note
perception	of, TBLT, teachers, teacher, EFL, language, belief, etc.	*perception of TBLT*	High in 2017–2025	Teacher cognition and learner belief systems
mobile	supported, TBLT, applications, learning, based, group, platform, etc.	*mobile-supported TBLT*	High in 2017–2025	Technological mediation and increased learner agency

Collocations in Table 3 were extracted using a ±4 word window (four words before and after each node) across the 2005–2025 corpus. Function words (e.g., *the*, *a*, *of*) were omitted from the top collocate lists for a clearer interpretation. Collocation strength reflects the discursive shift from procedural and theoretical concerns to socio-technical and affective dimensions of TBLT.

Summary of Key Trends

- **Linguistic Gains:** TBLT consistently improves fluency and complexity, while gains in accuracy remain moderate which confirms its meaning-focused communicative orientation.
- **Task Completion:** Learners' task response and completion improve through iterative cycles, scaffolding, and the integration of technological tools, supporting autonomous and multimodal task engagement.
- **Perceptions:** Learners view TBLT as motivating and authentic, whereas teachers often adopt hybrid

approaches to reconcile TBLT principles with institutional and assessment constraints.

- **Technology & Affective Shift:** Post-2015 research places increasing emphasis on mobile-supported learning and affective engagement (motivation, grit, anxiety regulation), which shows that technology acts as both a mediating and enabling factor in task performance.
- **Discourse Evolution:** Collocational and keyword analyses indicate a shift from a procedural/theoretical focus (*task-based language teaching, planning, focus on form*) in early studies (2005–2015) to a socio-technical and affective framing (*perception, mobile, motivation*) in later years (2017–2025). This discursive and collocational broadening reflects a re-visioning of the TBLT paradigm from mere delineation of the principles of a task to an examination of beliefs, affect, and the mediation of technology.

DISCUSSION

Linguistic Representation of TBLT in ELT Research (RQ1)

An analysis of the representation of the concept of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) within English Language Teaching (ELT) research conducted between 2000 and 2025 indicates a paradigmatic change from method-centric discourse to socio-technical and affective pedagogical discourse. Empirical works from previous decades (2000-2010) focused predominantly on procedural and theoretical constructs like ‘tasks’, ‘planning’, and ‘focus on form’, reflecting the SLA-driven

conceptualizations of TBLT espoused by Rod Ellis (2003), Peter Skehan (1998), and N. S. Prabhu (1987). These focus areas were linked to procedural and accuracy-fluency interrelations, revealing a more mechanistic understanding of the design and implementation of tasks.

However, in research conducted after 2015, there has been a marked change in the main themes of the discourse. These themes include perception, belief, mobile, motivation, and grit. The discourse has evolved, shifting TBLT away from being perceived primarily as a linguistic or methodological construct toward being recognized as a more complex pedagogical ecosystem situated within the socio-technical framework of affective engagement and teacher cognition. This finding corresponds to those of Martin East (2021) and Skehan (2017) who noted the impact of context, teacher beliefs, and technology on the discourse surrounding TBLT.

This evolution is illustrated perfectly in the diachronic thematic coding (Table 4) which depicts the SLA-based theoretical framing focusing on pedagogy, technology, and emotion in recent years.

Table 4. Thematic Codes by Period (Relative Prominence)

Theme Code	Description	2005–2010	2011–2015	2016–2025
T1	Theoretical justification (SLA-based arguments)	High	Medium	Medium
T2	Pedagogical benefits (fluency, motivation, outcomes)	Medium	Medium	High
T3	Implementation challenges	Low	High	High

Theme Code	Description	2005–2010	2011–2015	2016–2025
	(teacher readiness, assessment)			
T4	Technology integration (CALL/Mobile, platforms)	Low	Medium	High
T5	Local/contextual issues (policy, exams, class size)	Medium	High	High

Note. Thematic categories based on 87 corpus articles reveal a gradual shift from SLA-oriented conceptual framing to socio-technical and affectively enriched discourse.

Keywords, Collocational Patterns, and Thematic Clusters (RQ2)

The collocational analysis alludes to the diachronic change in the TBLT discourse. Past studies (2000-2010) showed consistent co-occurrence of TBLT, planning time, and focus on meaning, which illustrated the procedural TBLT emphasis in early works. These findings are consistent to the clusters of lexes and themes in the early SLA-focused discourse (task complexity, planning condition, and trade-offs of fluency and accuracy) (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998).

Conversely, the recent studies (2017-2025) showed the collocations mobile supported TBLT, teacher perception, and motivational engagement. This evolution in lexes is abridged pedagogical changes as well as a shift in TBLT to multilayered discourse that includes pedagogy,

technology, teacher beliefs, and learner emotion (Carless, 2012; East, 2021).

This also reflects the global tendencies in lang to tech-enhanced learning where the design of tasks incorporates mobile tech and flexible digital environment to promote active learning autonomy and interaction. Moreover, the emphasis in areas outside SLA core focus, such as motivation and grit, are signs of the shift in TBLT discourse.

Diachronic Evolution of the TBLT Discourse (RQ3)

The diachronic analysis of the 87 studies demonstrates three distinct phases of discursive development, which mirror both the historical approaches of TBLT and its changing research priorities:

1. **2000–2009 — Theoretical Grounding:**

   Dominated by SLA-based terminology and procedural constructs (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998). Focus areas included planning, task structure, and the balance between fluency and accuracy.

2. **2010–2016 — Implementation and Contextualization:**

   Research shifted toward contextual factors such as implementation barriers, PPP–TBLT debates, and issues of teacher preparedness and curriculum alignment (Carless, 2012; East, 2014).

3. **2017–2025 — Technology and Beliefs:**

   The discourse increasingly emphasized mobile learning, affective engagement, and teacher beliefs. This reflects the rise of socio-technical

mediation and cognitive-affective framing in language teaching.

These phases demonstrate how TBLT has changed from a method defined by procedural SLA constructs to a hybrid pedagogical model responsive to local contexts and technological change.

Learner and Teacher Perceptions (RQ4)

The history of TBLT discourse is intertwined with how learners and teachers understand and perform tasks in the classroom. *Motivational, genuine, and interactive* are the characteristics learners attribute to TBLT. These dominate perceptions align with findings on the significant enhancement of speaking and writing in TBLT settings (East, 2021). However, learners also express concerns about task difficulty, unequal peer collaboration, and insufficient feedback.

When it comes to teachers, a more hybrid and weak form of TBLT, where a theoretical balance of task-based principles is made with the realities of the institution, examination-oriented curriculum, and resource limitations, is shown to be the more common practice. This is in line with findings in teacher cognition which identify that the priorities and beliefs of teachers, along with the realities of the institutions they are in, are the influencing factors on the pedagogical decisions made, more than the methods training (Carless, 2012; East, 2014).

Table 5. Learner vs Teacher Perspectives on TBLT (Synthesis)

Stakeholder	Positive Themes	Reported Challenges	Representative Wording	Implication
Learners	Motivation, authenticity, interaction, writing/speaking gains	Task difficulty; uneven feedback; pairing/grouping issues	"Tasks feel real and useful; more chances to speak/write."	Maintain authenticity; scaffold difficulty; structure peer work
Teachers	Learner engagement; communicative focus	Exam pressure; curriculum fit; time; beliefs	"We adapt tasks with support to meet institutional demands."	Task-supported implementations; alignment with assessment; PD on TBLT

As shown in Table 5, perceptual asymmetries between learners and teachers play a crucial role in how TBLT is interpreted and enacted in practice.

Technological Mediation and Affective Engagement (RQ4)

Finally, one of the most striking patterns in the discourse is the technological and affective turn of TBLT research after 2015. Mobile learning platforms, digital feedback tools, and blended learning environments have become central to TBLT design. This aligns with a broader pedagogical shift toward learner agency, autonomy, and affective engagement.

Recent studies demonstrate that technology-supported tasks enhance interaction, lower anxiety, and increase learner motivation. Affective constructs such as *motivation*, *grit*, and *anxiety regulation* have become core thematic clusters, highlighting a holistic approach to language learning that integrates cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Table 6. Technology and Affective Indicators Over Time

Period	Technology Modality	Affective Constructs	Reported Impact	Sectional Emphasis
2005–2010	Early CALL examples	—	Limited, mainly illustrative	Discussion
2011–2015	Mixed digital tools (blended learning)	Motivation (emerging)	Moderate impact; context dependent	Findings / Discussion
2016–2025	Mobile-supported platforms; digital feedback tools	Motivation, grit, anxiety regulation	High engagement, improved lexical & listening gains	Findings / Discussion / Implications

Table 6 illustrates that technology use has evolved from peripheral CALL integration to fully embedded mobile-supported task design, thus bringing affective constructs to the forefront of TBLT discourse.

Implications

The findings present a distinct repositioning of TBLT in the field of ELT. It is no longer seen and treated as a homogeneous approach or model, but rather as a complex pedagogical model which embodies the following:

- **Epistemological Broadening:** The shift from SLA-based proceduralism to socio-technical and affective discourse.
- **Contextualization:** Emphasis on local adaptation and teacher beliefs.
- **Technological Mediation:** Mobile and digital platforms as structural mediators of task execution.
- **Affective Integration:** Motivation and emotion as critical learning variables.

The results of the study correlate with modern views of language pedagogy as a socially situated, technologically mediated, and affectively engaged practice (East, 2021; Skehan, 2017; Carless, 2012). This reconceptualization of task-based language teaching (TBLT) leads to significant ramifications and sustainability in teacher educational programs, curriculum development, and language policy at the institutional level.

CONCLUSION

This study, conducted in a corpus-based method, investigated how, and to what extent, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has found a place in English Language Teaching (ELT) literature as a linguistic and discursive phenomenon in the literature published from 2000 to 2025. This study, with the help of 87 peer-reviewed articles (comprising a total of 431,670 words), sought to uncover and interpret major shifts in the diachronic use of the corpus concerning the keywords, collocations of keywords and their thematic sets, as well as the perception of the stakeholders. These major shifts formed the basis of the four research questions.

In relation to RQ1, the study noted changes in the lexical framing of TBLT. Early studies featured SLA-based terminology with the keywords, task, planning, and focus on form, heavily reflecting N. S. Prabhu (1987), Rod Ellis (2003), and Peter Skehan's (1998) theoretical frameworks. In contrast, more recent studies leaned towards keywords such as perception, mobile, motivation, and belief, which convey a greater focus on a socio-technical and affectively enriched discourse (e.g., Martin East, 2021).

For RQ2, collocational patterns confirmed this lexical shift. Earlier collocates emphasized procedural task implementation and form-meaning dynamics, whereas those collocates that were evident post-2015 centered around motivation, teacher perceptions, and task design that assisted mobile devices. This corroborates TBLT's shift from the more restrictive definition of a method towards a flexible pedagogical framework which is influenced by technology, affect, and cognition.

Addressing RQ3, the diachronic analysis revealed three temporal units, which include: (1) theoretical grounding between 2000 and 2009, (2) contextual adaptation between 2010 and 20016, and (3) socio-technical and affective integration between 2017 and 2025. These temporal units reflect the global trend in TBLT research, which shifts from SLA proceduralism to more contextualized, hybrid and technologically integrated practices.

With relation to RQ4, the perceptual analysis shows how learners tend to perceive TBLT among the activities as the most authentic, motivating and interaction rich, while teachers, because of the envisaged institutional constraints, assessment frameworks, and persistent belief systems, choose to enact task-supported hybrid models. Moreover, the post-2015 rise of mobile- supported learning and affective engagement serves as an indication of the pedagogical shift: greater integration of TBLT as a cognitive-linguistic and socio-emotional learning space.

On the whole, the findings provide a further clarification of TBLT as a dynamic and fluid discourse, rather than a linear method. They resonate with the current literature's call to include the constructs of teacher

cognition (Carless, 2012) and learner affect (East, 2021), and technology-supported interaction (Skehan, 2017) in task-based education. Such an expansion of the discourse in the TBLT framework has significance for curriculum innovation, teacher training, and language policy. To implement TBLT, institutions need to focus beyond methodological proficiency to include contextual factors, technological infrastructure, and the emotional aspects of learning.

Subsequent investigations ought to delineate further the intersection of technology, affect, and task design, especially within longitudinal classroom studies alongside multimodal discourse analysis, and the ways in which local policy and teachers' belief systems as mediators provide insight into the ways task-based approaches adapt within various educational contexts.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study takes a diachronic view of TBLT discourse, but there are some challenges. Firstly, even though the compilation was carefully designed to represent significant publications observable between 2000 and 2025, the majority are publications in English, failing to represent how TBLT has been understood in other non-Anglophone academic settings. Future studies could broaden the compilation to include other non-English publications to present a linguistically diverse and more pluricontinental representation of the TBLT discourse.

Secondly, the study is based solely on published academic discourse, which engages with the theoretical and empirical aspects of TBLT, but does not address how it has been enacted in the classroom. Additional studies

that utilize classroom data and materials such as teacher discourse, lesson plans, and student interactions could provide more insights on how academic discourse and pedagogical practices are in alignment or are in contradiction.

Thirdly, while there was a focus on collocational, keyword and thematic analyses to identify common patterns, the study did not engage with critical discourse analysis (CDA) or analyses of rhetorical structure which delve into the inner workings of social structures and the ways in which institutions are framed or the boundaries of knowledge in TBLT scholarship. Future research could use such methods to examine the underlying representation of framed TBLT research.

Finally, additional research could examine different regions and contexts looking at how varying educational policies, policies, and models of teacher education influence the framing and implementation of TBLT in research and practice.

REFERENCES

Ahmadian, M. J., & Bygate, M. (Eds.). (2021). *The Cambridge handbook of task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108868327

Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge University Press.

Boulton, A. (2010). Data-driven learning: On paper, in practice. *Language Learning & Technology, 14*(3), 129–159. https://www.lltjournal.org/item/2728

Boulton, A., & Cobb, T. (2017). Corpus use in language learning: A meta-analysis. *Applied Linguistics, 38*(3), 355–378. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amv030

Carless, D. (2012). TBLT in EFL settings: Looking back and moving forward. *Language Teaching, 45*(4), 507–514. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000017

Chambers, A. (2019). *Exploring English with online corpora: An introduction*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315162998

Çetin, N. (2022). The effect of task-based vs. form-focused instruction on target structure use in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. *RumeliDE Journal of Language and Literature Studies, (31)*, 169–188. https://doi.org/10.29000/rumelide.1225077

East, M. (2014). Making task-based language teaching work in the classroom. *ELT Journal, 68*(4), 434–442. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu052

East, M. (2021). *Task-based language teaching from the teachers' perspective*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003124931

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2017). Position paper: Moving task-based language teaching forward. *Language Teaching, 50*(4), 507–526. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000179

Fu, Q.-K, & Hwang, G.-J. (2018). Trends in mobile technology-supported collaborative learning: A systematic review of journal publications from 2007 to 2016. *Computers & Education, 119*, 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.01.004

Johns, T. (1991). From printout to handout: Grammar and vocabulary teaching in the context of data-driven learning. *CALL Austria, 10*, 14–34.

Kavak, V. İ. (2024). Evaluating a task-based lesson plan: a case study of turkish efl learners. *The Literacy Trek, 10*(3), 309-338. https://doi.org/10.47216/literacytrek.1489532

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012589042-7/50015-3

Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Long, M. H., & Crookes, G. (1992). Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly, 26*(1), 27–56. https://doi.org/10.2307/3587368

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336

Öcel, M., & Su Bergil, A. (2022). Teachers' Attitudes towards Task-Based Language Teaching in an EFL Context. *Sakarya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 22*(1), 68-82. https://doi.org/10.53629/sakaefd.1069149.

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., … Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ, 372*, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Qin, J., & Lei, L. (2022). A bibliometric analysis of task-based language teaching research (1980–2020). *System, 108*, 102817. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102817

Robinson, P. (2011). *Second language task complexity: Researching the cognition hypothesis of language learning and performance*. John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/tblt.2

Römer, U. (2011). Corpus research applications in second language teaching. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 31*, 205-225. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0267190511000055

Shadiev, R., Yang, M., & Huang, Y.-M. (2020). Review of studies on technology-enhanced language learning and teaching. *Sustainability, 12*(2), 524. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020524

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford University Press.

Skehan, P. (2017). Task-based language teaching: Understanding tasks. *Language Teaching, 50*(3), 466–482. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000182

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics: Studies in honour of H. G. Widdowson* (pp. 125–144). Oxford University Press.

Tunçel, H., Utku, B., Akçay, A., & Sözen, E. (2017). Pragmatic competence through task-based language teaching in Turkish EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Language Academy, 5*(7), 309–321. https://doi.org/10.18033/ijla.3718

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Longman.