

Series editors' preface

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Individual Differences and Task-Based Language Teaching

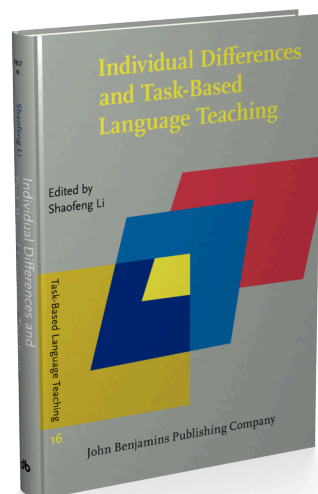
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Series editors' preface

It is a great pleasure to introduce this state-of-the-art collection edited by Shaofeng Li as the 16th volume in the *Task-Based Language Teaching: Issues, Research and Practice* series. Compiled by one of the leading experts on individual differences in the field of second language acquisition, this book makes a timely and vital contribution to the TBLT literature.

While being a learner-centred approach to language teaching is seen as a key advantage of TBLT, so far researchers have paid relatively less attention to the role of individual differences in relation to task-based teaching and learning. Tasks, of course, should be inherently connected with learners' motivation, anxiety, and enjoyment, and engaging in tasks no doubt calls upon distinct dimensions of language learning aptitude. Achieving an in-depth understanding of the relationship between these and other individual differences and task-based learning is important, as it may help optimise TBLT depending on learner profiles and needs. Ultimately, such an understanding may scaffold the improved enactment of TBLT as a truly learner-centred pedagogical framework. This edited collection is therefore hugely welcomed, as it begins to systematically explore how individual differences may influence the processes and outcomes of task-based language teaching and learning.

Reflecting a growing interest in investigating intersections between tasks and individual differences (IDs), this volume constitutes the first book-length treatment of the topic. Unlike previous publications, it offers a comprehensive coverage of various types of IDs in the context of TBLT, yielding new perspectives on well-researched ID factors such as anxiety and aptitude, as well as exploring IDs that have been little examined to date within TBLT, for example, task enjoyment and learner beliefs. The volume also provides novel insights into how different IDs interact with both task products and processes, employing a variety of research methods ranging from aptitude-treatment-interaction designs to research syntheses. Another unique strength of the book is its attention to teacher IDs and teachers' perceptions of the role of IDs in TBLT, thereby facilitating more direct interfaces between TBLT research and practice, well aligned with the goals of this series.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that provides an overview of previous theoretical and empirical work on individual differences within TBLT. The introduction also puts forward a set of recommendations about how research findings about IDs and TBLT may be applied to pedagogical practices. The following three chapters centre around two affective factors, task anxiety and enjoyment,

including a review of previous research on task anxiety, a study describing the development and validation of a new task enjoyment scale, and an empirical study investigating associations between task complexity and task enjoyment and anxiety. Then, the focus shifts to the cognitive IDs of aptitude and working memory, with a chapter reporting on a study investigating links between aptitude and languaging during task-based work and another looking into potential relationships between working memory, anxiety, and different types of planning. Conative variables are the subject of the two chapters to follow, both sharing the results of systematic reviews on task motivation and engagement and on learner and teacher beliefs in TBLT, respectively. Finally, young learners and teachers, two underexplored populations in TBLT, are highlighted, with a chapter discussing the role of age in TBLT, a study reporting teachers' views on the role of learner IDs in task-based settings, and an empirical paper examining how teachers with varied experience adapt tasks to fit their learners' needs and contexts. The concluding chapter, inspired by the contents of the volume, proposes a framework to guide further investigations into IDs and TBLT.

In sum, this volume presents a cutting-edge account of ongoing theoretical and empirical work on IDs and TBLT, bringing together research on a variety of ID factors and populations employing diverse research methods. It will undoubtedly serve as an essential reference for future research into individual differences within the context of TBLT, ultimately helping to generate insights for TBLT practitioners on how best to accommodate learners with different abilities and needs.

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