Task-based language teaching (TBLT) constitutes an educational framework for the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages that has attracted interest from a wide range of stakeholders in different educational contexts over the last four decades (Bygate 2020:284; East 2021:3). TBLT adopts communicative tasks as the central unit for identifying language-learning needs and goals, designing learning activities, and assessing language competences. Its theoretical and practical foundations are consistent with theory and research on (instructed) second language acquisition (Ellis 2017; Long 2015, 2016).

The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching, edited by M. J. Ahmadian and M. H. Long and published by Cambridge University Press, is the first comprehensive handbook on TBLT, although task-related literature has greatly increased in recent years (see e.g. Bygate 2020; East 2021; Ellis et al. 2019; Jackson 2022). After a tribute to the late Michael Long and his significant contributions to the field of TBLT, the handbook starts with a preface by the editors. Defining ‘pedagogic tasks […] as meaning-focused, outcome-oriented activities’ (p. xxx), M. J. Ahmadian and M. H. Long clearly state that the handbook follows a strong, ‘genuine’ version of TBLT. Thus, the volume excludes task-supported language teaching, which is consistent with the psycholinguistic rationale outlined in the first part. The book ends with a closing chapter, in which the editors address areas such as teacher cognition, online TBLT and curriculum design that could
be crucial for increasing the acceptance and promoting the implementation of TBLT among practitioners.

The handbook contains eight sections that are composed of different numbers of chapters and are written by international experts of the field. Each part includes at least one theoretical chapter and a varying number of case studies from diverse educational and cultural contexts. The contributions end with suggested further readings and study questions that encourage the application of what has been addressed. This makes the handbook an excellent resource not only for theorists and researchers, but also for pre-service and in-service language teachers.

The first section, Part I (Chapters 1–2), presents ‘The Rationale for Task-Based Language Teaching’ from a psycholinguistic (P. Skehan) and a pedagogical perspective (M. Bygate, V. Samuda, and K. Van den Branden). P. Skehan analyses the learning potential of tasks in connection with implicit and explicit processes as well as the impact of tasks (pre-, during-, post-tasks) on performance in terms of complexity, accuracy, lexis and fluency (CALF). Bygate et al. explore the learning potential in TBLT and identify three principles that are decisive in this respect: the meaningfulness principle (learners have to engage with meaning-making), the accessibility principle (form-focused work in and arising out of the task), and the integration principle (the integration of form-focused work back into the task). Both chapters support the theoretical foundation of learner-centeredness in TBLT.

The second section, Part II (Chapters 3–5) deals with tasks and task-based needs analysis as a starting-point for any task-based course design. In particular, Chapter 4 (E. J. Serafini) and its subchapters 4A–D offer insights into concrete needs analyses across diverse language-learning contexts worldwide, including contexts other than EFL learning. There are examples from Aboriginal Australian students in vocational training, Syrian refugee parents in Turkey, Japanese university students and undergraduate students in a Spanish foreign-language programme in China. In Chapter 5, M. H. Long provides a detailed overview of the collection of target tasks and the analysis of target discourse, an essential part of needs analysis that follows the identification of target tasks. In Chapter 5A and 5B, target discourse analysis is exemplified by two projects, i.e. weather forecasts and office-hour interactions.

Part III (Chapters 6–8) is concerned with task and syllabus design in a task-based framework. While P. Robinson integrates three components in his instructional design theory of pedagogic task sequencing in Chapter 6, R. Gilabert and A. Malicka discuss the required steps and considerations progressing from needs analysis to task sequencing in Chapter 7. This is
enriched by Chapter 7A in which a task-based telecollaborative exchange project with students from the United States and Italy is outlined. The contribution on the practical dimensions of task design by V. Samuda and M. Bygate (Chapter 8) is accompanied by subchapter 8A, which explores the situation of EFL-learning refugees in the Netherlands. Surprisingly, there are no further subchapters in Chapters 7 and 8.

Part IV (Chapters 9–10) looks at methodological and pedagogical dimensions of task-based language teaching, with Chapter 9 (G. Granena and Y. Yılmaz) presenting evidence for several components of TBLT methodology such as the use of focus on form (FonF), implicit language learning and individualisation and Chapter 10 investigating the interface of tasks and technology. M. González-Lloret and N. Ziegler (Chapter 10) discuss challenges of technology-mediated TBLT as well as potentials for future research, whereas the subchapters present two case studies on web- and mobile-based TBLT (10A and 10C) and one on the implementation of TBLT in Indigenous language instruction (10B).

The focus of the fifth section (Chapter 11) lies on the relatively underexplored target group of school-aged learners and the potential of tasks for their language learning. While M. García Mayo discusses task-supported interactions in early foreign-language and CLIL classrooms, the two subchapters comprise case studies in primary education including CLIL classrooms in Australia (11A) and EFL learners in China (11B).

Part VI (Chapter 12) evolves around teachers and teacher training in and for TBLT. Specifically, M. East revisits core questions of the discourse, emphasises the essential role of the teacher and discusses core dimensions of effective teacher training as well as prevailing impediments for TBLT in educational practice. In the following, 12A explores novice language teachers’ implementation of TBLT in bilingual schools in Honduras, and 12B outlines the genesis and implementation of an online TBLT training course geared towards teachers, teacher educators and course designers.

Part VII (Chapters 13–14) covers two thematic areas. First, J. M. Norris and M. East explore task-based assessment including several references to the field of language testing. Then, J. M. Norris and J. M. Davis address the much-needed evaluation of task-based programmes. The subchapters 14A and 14B examine different language-learning programmes (TBLT vs. PPP, immersion programmes) and 14C presents a comprehensive study of task-based learning, teaching and assessing in a primary school context.

Part VIII (Chapters 15–17) is dedicated to current research desiderata and future perspectives. Specifically, A. Révész (Chapter 15) provides an overview of core methods used in task-related research and describes selected issues such as questions of validity, triangulation or the need for
longitudinal research. In Chapter 16, K. Van den Branden discusses the idea of innovation in/and TBLT claiming that ‘what counts as an innovation in education is not determined by its initiators, but rather by its potential users’ (p. 768). Thus, he identifies (language) teachers as the facilitators of TBLT in classroom practice and combines the concept of innovation, among others, with the incorporation of modern technology, cooperative learning and alternative forms of assessment. Finally, J. Newton (Chapter 17) examines the role of context for TBLT in theoretical and practical terms and discusses three implications for research in the field. Thereby, the author distinguishes between research in and about diverse contexts, draws on recent empirical studies and makes the case for context sensitive TBLT research.

The work as a whole impresses with its selection and arrangement of the chapters replicating the steps and contemplations relevant for implementing a task-based approach in practice and its accessible style of writing. Remarkably, the volume does not exhibit an overemphasis on EFL but successfully integrates findings from a variety of contexts and foreign/second languages. While not every author provides a clear definition for the task construct, an entire chapter (S. Sasayama, Part II, Chapter 3) is dedicated to (critical) questions revolving around conceptualisations and definitions of tasks. Overall, providing a comprehensive overview of current debates and showcasing how TBLT can be implemented not only in laboratory experimental but, particularly, in real classroom settings, both online and offline and in different international and educational contexts, The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching will meet the needs of (future) language teachers and researchers alike in one single volume.

References