**Proposal for a TBLT course for an international artist collective in Istanbul**

**Context**

Feedback from our closed group of 5 Intermediate students from the XXX artist collective indicates that while they appreciate their teachers’ efforts, they are not satisfied with our approach. They have received funding for training to make their collective more sustainable and English is key to this. Here is their feedback:

* + ‘The teacher is motivated but I’m learning English to sell my artwork, and the lessons don’t help.’
  + ‘My teacher’s grammar explanations are clear, but when I meet gallerists, I don’t have time to think about grammar.’
  + ‘Our coursebook (Business Results), doesn’t show what we really do at work.’

I would like to pilot TBLT with this group to evaluate its suitability in our context.

**Background: PPP/TSLT vs. TBLT**

For the last 30 years, this school has followed a **synthetic** syllabus, whereby ‘different parts of the language are taught separately…so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts’ (Wilkins, 1976 in Nunan 1988: 27) , with **ready-made input** dictated by the coursebook.

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| TBLT follows an **analytic** syllabus. The starting point is ‘the **communicative purposes** for which the language is used’ (Nunan 1988:28). It is based on **needs analysis** and respects the **‘internal learner syllabus’** (Corder 1967 in Long 2015: 24). Learning is therefore **non-linear**, and **student-directed**. |

Even when we claim to focus on outcomes e.g. ‘You can talk about your work’ (Baade 2011:2), the underlying purpose is to **practise discrete grammatical structures** (‘frequency adverbs’) and **lexical items** (e.g. adjectives describing work).

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| In TBLT, the syllabus is based on **tasks,** ‘the **real-world activities** people think of when planning, conducting, or recalling their day’( Long 2015:6). Instead of presenting language in a linear, pre-ordained sequence, the syllabus is built around a series of **graded**, **pedagogical tasks** that become increasingly complex cognitively, leading to the ‘exit’ task (a **real world task**). |

Our reliance on coursebooks has led to the widespread use of **PPP**. Reading and listening exercises serve to **showcase structures** so **texts** are often **inauthentic** and **impoverished** to provide multiple examples of structures, which are presented then practised, before a production exercise which asks students to use the language that has been presented, e.g. ex.5 (idem:7), ‘Describe these jobs using adjectives from 4’. In other words, the **focus is on formS**.

Together with the case studies in each chapter, this constitutes **TSLT** (Task Supported Language Teaching), where ‘specific forms are first taught explicitly and then practised under ‘real operating conditions’ using tasks’ (DeKeyser 1998 in Ellis 2017: 514). For instance, learners take part in a networking event which recycles the skills and language presented in the rest of the unit (Baade 2011: 11), the idea being that ‘practice enables declarative knowledge to be proceduralized and automatized’ (Ellis 2017: 514).

This emphasis on structures affects teacher and learner behaviour negatively, with mechanical drills, unnatural exchanges in class, the use of display questions, and the dominance of teacher-initiated exchanges. (Long 2015: 349).

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| Instead, TBLT advocates l**earning by doing.**  Language is focused on **reactively, when need arises,** through a **Focus on Form.** The singular ‘Form’, not ‘Forms’ denotes a **holistic** view of language which emphasises the interrelatedness of structures (Long 2015:22). Texts are **enriched** (idem:307): they maintain **genre features** and **complexity** but **elaboration** adds support to aid comprehension. |

**The following SLA concepts support TBLT**

1. TBLT does not prescribe what structures to teach so it respects the learners’ **interlanguage development** and the **order of acquisition** of certain features (idem: 23) by responding to needs as they arise because ‘learners, not teachers, have most control over their language development’ (idem: 24). Tasks help learners because ‘through conversational adjustments, [they] **manipulate and modify it**’ ( Foster 1998: 1) or more precisely ‘**co-construct it**’ (Foster & Ohta 2003:420).
2. Whether declarative knowledge (how language works) can be converted into **procedural knowledge (**the ability to use language in real situations) is doubtful (idem: 21). TBLT enables learners to learn by doing, with precise interventions that may speed up the acquisition process (idem:26).
3. Acquisition requires **rich input** (idem: 307). TBLT resolves comprehension problems by **elaborating** on texts rather than simplifying them (ibid).
4. Because **implicit learning** is a lengthy process (Long 2015: 25) for adults due to he existence of a **developmental sequence,** some **explicit learning** helps. The **Focus on Form** element of a TBLT lesson, i.e. reactively ‘drawing learners’ attention to linguistic problems in context’ (idem: 27), notably in the form of **negative feedback e.g. recasts** responds to a language need and may therefore be absorbable into the learner’s interlanguage.

**A 25-hour course for the XXX collective in Istanbul**

A preliminary **needs analysis** reveals 3 **exit tasks** as a priority for the next 25 hours.

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| 1. **Writing grant proposals** |
| Giving information about the collective; communicating its vision. |
| Outlining a project that matches specifications:  - Reading grant specifications and extracting key expectations.  - Describing the project with reference to the sponsor’s specifications (writing) |
| 1. **Collaborating on events with cultural centres in Istanbul/ art centres abroad** |
| Emailing cultural centres to describe the proposed events and ask for support:  **-**Introducing the collective  -Briefly describing an exhibition/performance concept.  -Highlighting benefits of the collaboration  -Asking for concrete support (space, production costs, expertise). |
| Responding to emails, giving concrete information (dates, budget, practicalities)  -interpreting responses correctly  -writing short, polite emails providing information |
| Phone / video calls to give project updates  -understanding different accents  -communicating information concisely, politely and clearly.  -reacting to changes |
| In person meetings with cultural attachés / gallerists  - small talk – awareness of register, image projected  - describing artwork  - marketing artwork |
| 1. **Showcasing artwork on their website** |
| -writing artist biographies |

**Advantages for students and teachers**

These are tasks that the students need to perform at work for their collective to be viable –there will be a **tangible outcome**.

The skills can be **transferred** to other grant proposals/cultural events in the future.

They can **use their existing knowledge and skills** in class, which increases **motivation**.

They will **gain confidence** through scaffolding, rehearsal, preparation time, task repetition.

**Learning** is **durable** (procedural knowledge).

For teachers planning is more **meaningful**.

There will be **concrete measures** of the students’ progress (funding obtained / events organised).

Knowing their work is **evidence-based** may increase teacher confidence.

They will gain the students’ **trust.**

**Possible challenges for students and teachers**

Some students/teachers might **resist** the approach and demand explicit grammar input.

They might not react well to **correction**, preferring to follow ‘rules’ to ‘avoid errors’.

Teachers need to be comfortable with a degree of **unpredictability**.

Planning will be **time-consuming** and involve considerable research.

**Implementation process and role of the school**

Sequencing / discourse analysis

teaching

Target tasks

Pedagogic tasks

Needs analysis

Staff meetings: the approach and rationale

Allocate time / resources

Approach students/sponsors to communicate new approach/ask for support

Regular feedback from students/teachers on effectiveness of approach / quality of tasks / difficulty of tasks

Design assessment tools for students and evaluation tools for the course

Train teachers to conduct needs analysis, ‘select tasks, identify task difficulty, sequence tasks and conduct discourse analysis’1

Adapt course

Draw lessons from pilot and expand TBLT to other courses

Market course to similar art centres in Istanbul / large cities in Turkey

1 based on Gilabert & Malicka

(1200 words)

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