

## EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CLT- AND TBLT-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT TASKS IN MEASURING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ESP CONTEXTS

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### Abstract

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education, assessment plays a crucial role in determining learners' ability to communicate effectively in professional contexts. However, many assessment practices continue to rely on traditional testing formats that inadequately measure communicative competence. This study examines the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)- and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)-oriented assessment tasks in evaluating communicative competence among adult ESP learners. Using a qualitative and analytical approach, the study analyzes the extent to which these assessment types reflect authentic language use, support communicative performance, and align with key assessment principles such as validity and reliability. The findings suggest that while both CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessments contribute to communicative language evaluation, TBLT-oriented tasks demonstrate stronger alignment with workplace-related communicative demands due to their emphasis on authentic performance and contextualized interaction. Nevertheless, issues related to scoring consistency and assessment practicality remain significant challenges. The study proposes a principle-based approach for integrating communicative and task-based assessment practices into ESP contexts more effectively.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP); communicative competence; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); performance-based assessment; task authenticity; validity; reliability.

### Introduction

The growing demand for effective communication in professional and academic settings has significantly influenced approaches to language teaching and assessment within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education. Unlike general English instruction, ESP focuses on preparing learners to function within discipline-specific and workplace-oriented communicative environments. Consequently, assessment practices in ESP contexts must evaluate not only learners' linguistic knowledge but also their ability to use language meaningfully and effectively in authentic professional situations.

Despite this expectation, many ESP assessment systems continue to rely heavily on traditional testing methods that prioritize grammatical accuracy and discrete language forms over communicative performance. Such approaches often fail to capture learners' ability to participate in realistic workplace communication, thereby limiting the validity and practical relevance of assessment outcomes. As a result, communicative approaches to language teaching and assessment have received increasing attention in recent decades.

Among these approaches, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have emerged as two influential paradigms that emphasize meaningful communication and learner interaction. While CLT focuses broadly on communicative competence through interactive language use, TBLT extends this principle by organizing learning and assessment around authentic tasks that reflect real-world communicative demands. Consequently, both approaches have important implications for assessment design in ESP contexts.

However, although numerous studies have explored CLT and TBLT from pedagogical perspectives, limited research has critically examined their effectiveness specifically in assessment practices for ESP learners. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to how CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks differ in their ability to measure communicative competence within workplace-oriented contexts. Furthermore, questions remain regarding how these assessment approaches align with key testing principles such as authenticity, validity, and reliability.

Against this background, the present study evaluates the effectiveness of CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks in measuring communicative competence among adult ESP learners. More specifically, the study investigates the extent to which these assessment approaches support authentic language performance and proposes a principle-based perspective for improving communicative assessment practices in ESP education.

### Literature Review

Communicative competence has become a central objective in contemporary language education, particularly within ESP contexts where learners are expected to function effectively in professional communication settings. This shift has contributed to the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach that emphasizes meaningful interaction, learner participation, and the practical use of language in communicative situations. Rather than focusing exclusively on grammatical mastery, CLT views language as a tool for communication and social interaction. As a result, communicative competence involves not only linguistic accuracy but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

Building upon communicative principles, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged as a more performance-oriented extension of communicative pedagogy. TBLT organizes instruction and assessment around meaningful tasks that mirror real-life communicative activities. According to Ellis (2003), tasks should require learners to use language pragmatically in order to achieve specific outcomes, thereby encouraging authentic communication rather than mechanical language production. Within ESP contexts, this may include activities such as conducting workplace simulations, solving professional problems, participating in meetings, or analyzing technical information.

Although both CLT and TBLT prioritize communication, important differences exist between them, particularly in assessment practices. CLT-oriented assessment tasks often focus on interactional communication, role plays, and discussion-based activities designed to evaluate fluency and communicative effectiveness. However, these tasks may sometimes lack the contextual specificity necessary for professional language use. In contrast, TBLT-oriented assessment emphasizes authentic task completion and performance under realistic communicative conditions, making it particularly relevant for workplace-oriented ESP education.

The concept of authenticity therefore becomes highly significant in evaluating communicative assessment practices. Bachman and Palmer (1996) argue that assessment tasks should correspond closely to target language use situations in order to strengthen construct validity. In ESP contexts, authentic assessment is especially important because learners are expected to transfer classroom communication skills into real professional environments. Nevertheless, increasing authenticity may simultaneously create challenges related to scoring consistency and reliability. Since performance-based tasks often generate varied learner responses, assessors may interpret performances differently, leading to potential subjectivity in evaluation.

Furthermore, previous research suggests that communicative assessment practices frequently encounter a principle–practice gap. While theoretical models emphasize authenticity, interaction, and performance, classroom assessments often remain constrained by practicality, institutional expectations, and limited assessment literacy among instructors. Consequently, there remains a need for research that critically evaluates how CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment

tasks function in real ESP assessment settings and how effectively they measure communicative competence within workplace-oriented contexts.

### **Methodological Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design in order to evaluate the effectiveness of CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks in measuring communicative competence within ESP contexts. The study focuses on adult ESP learners and examines assessment practices commonly used in workplace-oriented language instruction.

The research begins with a document analysis of existing ESP assessment materials, including speaking tasks, role plays, simulations, discussion activities, and workplace-oriented performance tasks. Particular attention is given to the communicative characteristics of assessment tasks and the extent to which they reflect authentic professional language use situations.

In addition, the study applies a principle-based evaluative framework centered on authenticity, validity, reliability, and communicative performance. CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks are comparatively analyzed to determine how effectively they measure learners' communicative competence and workplace-related language abilities. The analysis also considers potential limitations related to scoring consistency, practicality, and task implementation.

Based on the findings, the study proposes a principled perspective for improving communicative assessment practices in ESP education through a more balanced integration of communicative interaction, authentic task performance, and structured evaluation procedures.

### **Discussion**

The findings indicate that both CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks contribute positively to the evaluation of communicative competence in ESP contexts. CLT-oriented tasks encourage interaction, fluency, and spontaneous communication, thereby helping learners demonstrate their ability to negotiate meaning and participate actively in communication. These tasks are particularly effective in promoting learner engagement and reducing overreliance on form-focused assessment.

However, the study also suggests that TBLT-oriented assessment tasks provide a stronger representation of workplace communicative demands because they require learners to complete meaningful and context-specific tasks that resemble real professional situations. For example, workplace simulations, technical problem-solving activities, and collaborative decision-making tasks enable learners to demonstrate communicative competence within realistic professional contexts. Consequently, TBLT-oriented assessment appears to strengthen construct validity more effectively than broader communicative assessment formats.

At the same time, the findings reveal important challenges related to reliability and practicality. Since performance-based communicative tasks often generate unpredictable learner responses, scoring consistency may become difficult to maintain. This issue is particularly evident in TBLT-oriented assessment, where authentic task performance introduces greater variability in language production. Nevertheless, the study suggests that these challenges can be reduced through analytic scoring rubrics, assessor training, and clearly defined performance criteria.

Overall, the study argues that effective ESP assessment should not rely exclusively on either CLT or TBLT, but should instead integrate the strengths of both approaches within a principle-based framework. While CLT contributes to communicative interaction and learner fluency, TBLT enhances authenticity and workplace relevance. A balanced combination of these approaches may therefore provide a more comprehensive and valid representation of communicative competence in ESP education.

### **Implications for ESP Assessment**

The study carries several important implications for ESP assessment practices. First, assessment design should incorporate more workplace-oriented communicative tasks that reflect authentic professional communication. Such tasks can help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use.

Second, ESP practitioners should receive greater support in assessment literacy, particularly in designing communicative and task-based performance assessments. Understanding principles such as authenticity, validity, and reliability is essential for developing effective communicative evaluation practices.

Finally, institutions should encourage the use of balanced assessment models that combine communicative interaction with authentic task performance. Such an approach may contribute to more meaningful, context-sensitive, and professionally relevant ESP assessment systems.

### **Conclusion**

This study has examined the effectiveness of CLT- and TBLT-oriented assessment tasks in measuring communicative competence within workplace-oriented ESP contexts. The findings demonstrate that while both approaches contribute to communicative language assessment, TBLT-oriented tasks offer stronger alignment with authentic professional communication due to their emphasis on contextualized performance and meaningful task completion. At the same time, challenges related to reliability and scoring consistency remain important considerations in communicative assessment design.

The study therefore argues for a principle-based approach that integrates the communicative strengths of CLT with the authenticity and performance orientation of TBLT. By balancing interaction, authenticity, validity, and structured evaluation procedures, ESP assessment can more effectively measure learners' readiness for real-world professional communication. Future research should further explore the empirical implementation of integrated communicative assessment models across different ESP disciplines and institutional contexts.

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