



EFL University Teachers' Perspectives on Using Task-Based Language Teaching in their Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate EFL teachers' perspectives on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and identifies its implementation challenges. Data for this study were collected from seven EFL university teachers through semi-structured interviews. Findings demonstrate that teachers understood the main principles of TBLT; however, they mistakenly restricted its use to teaching only speaking and listening skills and exclusively with high proficiency students. They also acknowledged several benefits of applying this approach, such as enhancing students engagement and communicative competence. Teachers revealed several obstacles impeded them from implementing TBLT effectively. Some of these obstacles are time constraints and inadequate pedagogical resources. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers should apply TBLT across all language skills using proficiency-tailored tasks. They should also pursue professional development programs about this approach. Educational authorities must allocate sufficient instructional time and fund professional development programs. Addressing these priorities is essential for effective TBLT implementation.

Keywords: task-based language teaching, task, EFL teachers, implementation challenges, professional development

وجهات نظر أساتذة الجامعات في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول استخدام نهج تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام في فصولهم الدراسية

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ملخص البحث:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف وجهات نظر معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول نهج تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام (TBLT) وتحديد التحديات التي تواجه تطبيقه، جمعت بيانات هذه الدراسة باستعمال مقابلات مع سبعة أساتذة جامعيين في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، أظهرت النتائج أن الأساتذة لهم دراية كافية بالمبادئ الأساسية لهذا النهج، إلا أن بعضهم يعتقد خاطئاً بأن هذا النهج يستخدم في تدريس مهارتي التحدث والاستماع فقط، ومع الطلاب ذوي الكفاءة العالية حصرياً، كما أقرّ الأساتذة بعدة فوائد لهذا النهج، مثل تعزيز تفاعل الطلاب وكفاءتهم التواصلية، وكشف الأساتذة عن وجود عدة عوائق تحول دون تطبيق TBLT بفعالية، من أبرزها ضيق الوقت في فصولهم الدراسية ونقص الموارد التربوية المناسبة. واستناداً إلى هذه النتائج، يُوصى بأن يستخدم الأساتذة هذا النهج لتدريس جميع المهارات اللغوية باستخدام مهام تتناسب مع مستوى الكفاءة اللغوية للطلاب، كما ينبغي لي الأساتذة المشاركة في برامج التنمية المهنية المتعلقة بهذا النهج، ويجب عن الجهات التعليمية تخصيص وقت كافٍ للأساتذة لتطبيق هذا النهج في فصولهم الدراسية وتمويل برامج التطوير المهني للأساتذة لضمان تطبيق فعال لنهج تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدريس القائم على المهام، المهمة، معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تحديات التطبيق، التطوير المهني.

INTRODUCTION

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach has gained great attention in the discipline of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Unlike traditional methods that prioritize explicit grammar teaching, this approach is based on the notion that language acquisition happens when learners practice language in meaningful real-world tasks (Ellis, 2003). Its main concern is developing learners' language skills through tasks designed to replicate real life situation (Ellis, 2003). TBLT also emphasizes the use of real-world tasks which involve group work, real-life situation, and problem solving activities to facilitate language learning. However, the successful use of this approach in EFL classrooms depends largely on teachers perspectives on it.

Teachers perspectives refer to the attitudes, beliefs, and views that teachers have about the different aspects of their teaching practices, including teaching approaches, methods, classroom management, course design, curriculum design, and students learning. These perspectives are shaped by many factors, such as teachers educational knowledge, personal experience, and professional training as well as the cultural context and educational environment where they teach (Borg, 2003). Teachers perspectives play an important role in forming teachers' teaching methods, strategies, techniques, and classroom management. Therefore, understanding these perspectives is crucial for improving teachers' performance and creating effective teaching and learning environment (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2003).

Although TBLT is widely discussed in educational literature and has been the focus of numerous research studies, particularly in EFL secondary schools level in Asian countries like China and Vietnam, there is a paucity of research investigating EFL university teachers' perspectives of using this approach in their classrooms, specifically in the Arab World, where Arabic is L1. Thus, this research study aims to fill this gap by examining EFL university teachers' perspectives of using TBLT and identifying the challenges they encounter when using this approach in their classrooms. Understanding these issues would provide valuable insights into the factors that influence the success and failure of using this approach in EFL classrooms. These insights would serve to offer some suggestions for implementing TBLT effectively in EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Task-Based Language Teaching

TBLT, which is a popular communicative language teaching approach, emphasizes the importance of engaging students natural abilities for acquiring and learning language incidentally as they engage with the target language (Ellis, 2009). This approach is grounded on the idea that "language learning will progress most successfully if teaching aims simply to create contexts in which the learner's natural language learning capacity can be nurtured rather than making a systematic attempt to teach the language bit by bit ..." (Ellis, 2009: p. 222). One of the main principles of this approach is that language is acquired through active engagement in communication rather than passive reception of input (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). TBLT prompts students to produce language in real-world context for enhancing their communicative competence and performance (Nunan, 2004). It prioritizes tasks in which students use language for meaningful communication as the core units of instruction. In this approach, teacher's role shifts from being the central provider of knowledge to being a facilitator who guides students through the completion of tasks. Simultaneously, students take responsibilities for their own learning by interacting with each other in task oriented activities (Nunan, 2004). Accordingly, TBLT maintains that students' learning of a language depends on their active use of the target

language in real-world context. This process is facilitated by their completion of communicative tasks.

Task-Based Language Teaching and Second Language Acquisition Theories

TBLT is deeply grounded in several second language acquisition (SLA) theories that emphasize the importance of students exposure to comprehensive input and of students interaction for the internalization of language information. One of these theories is Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), which posits that language is acquired when learners are exposed to comprehensible input (i.e., language slightly beyond their current level of competence, often referred to as $i+1$). TBLT provides rich opportunities for such input (new vocabulary and structures) to be acquired as learners engage in meaningful communication that exposes them to authentic language use. Another theory is the interaction theory of Long (1983), which states that language acquisition is significantly enhanced through interaction in the target language. Long emphasizes that the act of negotiating meaning during interaction, such clarification requests, feedback or reformulation, leads to deeper understanding that facilitates and accelerates language learning. TBLT promotes this interaction by incorporating tasks that require learners to negotiate meaning. The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) also emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Vygotsky argues that students perform tasks more effectively when they collaborate with more knowledgeable peers or teachers, operating with their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (i.e., the gap between learners current language proficiency and their language potential development). This aligns with TBLT, where students collaborate with each other to complete tasks. Through this social interaction, learners gain new insights and language structure that they can later use independently.

Definition of Task

A task, the main unit of instruction in TBLT, has been defined by scholars in various ways. Breen (1987) defines tasks as "activities that involve learners in using language, with primary focus on meaning, in order to attain a specific goal" (p.23). Similarly, Willis (1996) states that a task is "a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome" (p.53). Ellis (2003) also points out that a task is "a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an objective" (p.16). He elaborates that a task is an activity in which learners use the target language to achieve a specific communicative goal, such as solving problem, making decisions, or completing a project. Nunan (2004) gives a more comprehensive definition to a task stating that it is "an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language" (p.4). These definitions illustrate that a task refers to a purposeful activity in which learners use the target language to achieve a specific outcome, with an emphasis on meaning rather than form. Successful completion of a task requires students to engage both cognitive and pragmatic processes. Simply put, the primary aim of a task is fostering meaningful goal-driven language use, where students use the target language in real-world context to solve a problem, convey information, or express ideas.

Tasks have several characteristics that distinguish them from other types of language activities. Long (1985) states that the main characteristics of a task are goal-oriented, real-world relevance, authenticity and problem-solving orientation. Ellis (2003) explains that a task as a work-plan has four main aspects: focusing on meaning, having a gap, having a communicative outcome, and requiring students to use their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources. This suggests that a task should have a clear objective that students are required to achieve through the use of language. It should be designed to stimulate real-world situations in which students use language naturally. Moreover, it should activate students to engage in cognitive processes, such as reasoning, decision-making and critical thinking. These characteristics can lead to several benefits, such as enhancing learners motivational status, providing a space for students

to be repetitive without feeling bored, increasing students opportunities for flexible curriculum, giving them new learning insights, creating an environment for self-correction and promoting taking risks (Leaver and Kaplan, 2004).

Types of Tasks

Scholars classify tasks as pedagogical and real-life tasks, and each serves a distinct purposes in language teaching and learning. Pedagogical tasks involve controlled language use to reinforce specific linguistic forms through interaction and practice (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003). These tasks can be designed and organized to suit students of all proficiency levels (Nunan, 2004). On the other hand, real-life tasks are authentic and context-driven activities that correspond the communicative situations that students may encounter in real-life outside the classroom (Ellis, 2003). These tasks give students opportunities to use language naturally and spontaneously (Long, 2015). Doing these tasks, students are exposed to different linguistic structures and forms, cultural concepts, and real communicative situations that help them to build practical language skills and develop strong language competence and performance.

Both pedagogical and real-life tasks may have several types of tasks, such as input-based tasks, out-put based tasks, closed tasks, open tasks, focused tasks, unfocused tasked, and others (Ellis, 2009). Teachers may tailor the language complexity of these tasks to match their students level of proficiency. Input-based tasks involve students practicing listening and reading, while output- based tasks require students to speak and write, and they may also involve listening or reading (Ellis, 2024). Thus, these tasks can be used to teach all the language skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2024). Besides, closed tasks have specific clear outcomes, while open tasks have a number of possible outcomes. In addition, focused tasks are designed for students to practice specific linguistic feature, while unfocused tasks are directed to practice language in different ways (Ellis, 2024).

In classroom, teachers can use pedagogical tasks as a preparatory step which leads to real-life tasks as learners progress in proficiency. The gradual shift from pedagogical tasks to real-life tasks ensures a balance between linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness (Willis & Willis, 2007; Ellis, 2009). Both, pedagogical and real-life tasks, play critical role in students language learning: pedagogical tasks build students' language skills, and real-life tasks give students opportunities to apply these skills in real-life situations.

Benefits of Task-Based Language Teaching

TBLT offers numerous benefits that significantly enhance students learning. The most important ones are that it immerses students in authentic language use and creates natural opportunities for them to encounter new vocabulary and grammar through meaningful tasks. This contextual exposure to language and authentic language use are pivotal for incidental learning (Ellis. 2009; 2024). The repeated exposure to linguistic forms promotes acquisition, as frequency enhances retention (Ashcroft, Garner, and Hadingham, 2018). Ellis (2009) argues that learners acquire language more effectively when it is tied to meaningful tasks. Szczesniak and Sitter (2021, p14) reinforce this by noting that “when the learner witnesses an expression used in a real-life situation he or she is part of, its meaning is as compelling and believable as a flashbulb memory.” They further stress that optimal learning occurs in “meaningful teacher-learner interaction [and] realistic situations that highlight a new form’s meaning” (p. 14).

Beyond exposure, TBLT encourages comprehensible input, meaningful output, and interaction, key elements in SLA (Ellis, 2005). These three elements work together to facilitate both implicit and explicit language learning. Doing tasks, students not only receive language through listening and reading, but also produce it through speaking and writing and negotiate meaning during collaborative tasks (Ellis, 2005). These practices refine accuracy, build fluency, and foster communicative confidence. Moreover, interaction during tasks gives students

opportunities to receive feedback that assists them fostering both implicit and explicit knowledge.

TBLT also contributes to students' motivation and confidence. It bridges classroom learning and real-world language use by designing tasks that require learners to engage with authentic context beyond formal instructions (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). These tasks increase engagement and reduce anxiety. Choi and Nunan (2018) emphasize that language use beyond classroom presents challenges and opportunities that enrich the learning experience, supporting the development of both fluency and confidence. When students are encouraged to use the target language for practical purposes, they are more likely to develop fluency, self-efficacy, and a sense of progress. Despite these various benefits offered by TBLT, it has been the subject of criticism by many scholar.

Criticisms and Defenses of Using TBLT in Language Classrooms

Many scholars have criticized the application and the efficacy of TBLT in language classrooms. The major criticisms are that TBLT is inappropriate for low proficiency students who should be taught grammar rules explicitly, and that it ignores several grammatical forms and gives little attention to teaching vocabulary and pronunciation (Sheen, 2003; Swan, 2005). In response to these criticisms, Ellis (2009) states that these criticisms are based on misunderstanding of TBLT, and they overlook the use of input tasks which provide students with comprehensive input that is necessary for beginner students' language learning. He refutes that TBLT gives little attention to form, arguing that TBLT does not exclude grammar instruction, but it integrates it in more contextualized ways. He clarifies that grammar can be addressed in a manner that is incidental to task completion, allowing students to focus on meaning as well as the underlying structure (e.g. focused tasks). He adds that "tasks can also be input-based (i.e. involve listening and reading)" (p 235). These listening and reading input tasks help students to learn and acquire new words as well as improving their pronunciation skills. Another criticism is that TBLT is not appropriate for the exam-driven educational system whose main aim is preparing students for the exams which focus on the linguistic elements such as grammatical rules and lexical variety. To deal with these obstacles, Ellis (2009) states that TBLT can be used to prepare students for their exams using focused tasks that help students to focus on linguistic items needed in the exams and facilitate their learning of these items. In addition, Littlewood (2004) claims that TBLT cannot be used in traditional classrooms which have untrained teachers, large number of students and limited resources. To address this criticism, Willis and Willis (2007) assert that teachers need to receive adequate training to successfully apply TBLT. This training would assists them to effectively design and manage tasks that suit classroom settings. They also argue that the principles of TBLT can be adapted to suit various contexts. Many other criticisms were posited by some scholars, and these criticisms were refuted by Ellis (2009), who supported his counterarguments with theoretical and empirical evidence from existing research.

Previous Studies

Several research studies have explored EFL teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and challenges regarding TBLT, revealing both positive views and significant obstacles in its implementation. One of these studies was conducted by Zheng and Borg (2014) with three Chinese EFL secondary school teachers. The results indicate that the teachers had limited understanding of TBLT. Furthermore, their implementation of this approach is impeded by several factors, such as insufficient materials, conservative teachers' beliefs, large class sizes, constrained teaching time, and exam-oriented teaching.

Harris's (2016) study of 78 Japanese teachers demonstrate that most teachers implemented TBLT in their classroom and understood its key principles. They believed that TBLT can be

implemented successfully in their context. They also viewed it as an effective approach for teaching English and beneficial for addressing students' needs, motivating them, engaging their interests, and improving their interaction and language skills. These teachers emphasized that the successful use of TBLT requires adjusting task design, providing scaffolding supports, tailoring the approach to individual students, and preparing students for student-centered classroom.

Similarly, Bhandari (2020) explored Nepalese secondary EFL teachers perceptions of TBLT by using both observation and interview. The results of this study suggest that teachers acknowledged TBLT's benefits for fostering peer collaboration and authentic language use. The results also reveal that teachers faced challenges to apply TBLT in their large classrooms and they reported insufficient information and communication technology (ICT) skills for task design. The author concluded that effective TBLT implementation requires targeted teacher training, ICT support and smaller class sizes.

Another study was undertaken by Zhang (2021) with two Chinese university EFL teachers, using interviews and classroom observation. The findings reveal that both teachers understood the principles of TBLT, and they had positive attitudes towards this approach. They utilized TBLT to teach the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, they believed TBLT promotes students interaction and negotiation. However, these teachers faced significant challenges of using this approach. These challenges included noise, discipline, large classroom size, curriculum policy, traditional examination-based syllabus, mother tongue use, and time pressure. Accordingly, Zhang suggests that "Teachers should employ the task-based approach critically, which means they need to consider students' language proficiency, learning needs and their own educational system contexts" (p 97). He also emphasizes the necessity of ongoing professional support and guidance to help teachers apply TBLT effectively.

Milon et al. (2023) explored Bangladeshi tertiary teachers' and students' perceptions of TBLT for speaking skills through classroom observations and interviews. Both teachers and students reported positive engagement and showed reduced anxiety and increased motivation as they apply tasks. Teachers successfully implemented TBLT's three-phase structure (pre/during/post-task), acting as motivators and selecting contextually relevant tasks. The key factors for the successful implementation of TBLT in this context are error tolerance, and collaborative problem-solving. However, there are some challenges for implementing this approach which are topic relevance and instructional clarity. The study recommends sustained teacher training and student-centered task design to enhance speaking fluency in Bangladesh's EFL context.

A latest study was conducted by Liu and Ren (2024) who interviewed 12 Chinese EFL university students to investigate their use of TBLT. The results indicate that the teachers believe in student-centered role which aligns with TBLT principles. However, they implement this approach as a supplement rather than curriculum driver. As they do so, teachers face many challenges, such as large class sizes, exam-focused curricula, outdated textbooks, and insufficient training to apply this approach effectively. The study recommends localized teacher training, material adaptation, and administrative support to bridge policy-practice gaps in China's EFL context.

Aljasir (2024) conducted one of the few studies in a cultural context similar to this study's, where Arabic is the first language. He examined 60 EFL Saudi teachers' beliefs and practices of TBLT through qualitative analysis of data obtained from demographic questionnaires, lesson descriptions, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews. The results suggest that teachers held strong positive beliefs about TBLT's efficacy in developing language skills through authentic, student-centered tasks. These beliefs aligned robustly with their classroom

practices, which emphasized collaborative, real-world activities. The teachers' successful implementation of TBLT was supported by their educational backgrounds, ongoing training, and institutional support. However, the teachers faced some challenges centered on examination misalignment, large classes, and resource constraints. Notably, teachers successfully adapted TBLT to Saudi cultural contexts, reinforcing its viability in Arab EFL settings despite systemic barriers.

Hasnain and Halder (2021) reviewed 16 studies (published between 2004 and 2019) found that while most teachers generally understood TBLT, they struggled with its implementation. Recurring obstacles to implementing this approach effectively were teachers' lack of knowledge, insufficient training, and limited practical experience. Furthermore, teachers considered TBLT more appropriate for university students than for elementary-level ones. Hasnain and Halder concluded that teachers need proper training and professional development to successfully implement TBLT.

In another comprehensive review of 60 research studies on TBLT in Vietnam, Sang and Loi (2023) found that most studies focused on the effectiveness of TBLT on the productive skills over receptive ones. This review demonstrates that teachers and learners had positive attitudes towards TBLT. However, teachers identified several barriers to implementing this approach effectively. Some of these are low students proficiency, time constraints, large classroom sizes, lack of motivation, inadequate training. Based on this review, the researchers suggest that teachers should be supported through professional development and reflective practice.

From these studies, it is evident that TBLT effectively enhances students engagement, motivation, and interaction. It is also helpful for improving students' language skills through authentic, real-world tasks supported by pedagogical scaffolding. However, several factors impede the successful implementation of this approach in classrooms. Some of these factors are inadequate curriculum material, traditional teachers beliefs, large class size, time constraints, the use of mother tongue inside classroom, teachers lack of knowledge and understanding of this approach, teachers focus on standardized exams, some socio-cultural factors and others. These studies suggest that teachers need to extend their knowledge and understanding of this approach. They also need sufficient time, support and more flexible teaching environment to address these contextual barriers.

While the existing studies offer valuable insights into teachers perspectives on TBLT and reveal the challenges that teachers face applying this approach, most of them were conducted in East and Southeast Asian contexts in secondary schools or general EFL. Research remains scarce in the Arab regions where Arabic is the L1 and pedagogy is predominantly teacher-centered and exam oriented (Orafi & Borg, 2009; Alharbi, 2021) particularly at tertiary level. Moreover, little attention has been given to university teachers teaching advanced students in specialized English programs. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating EFL university teachers perspective on using TBLT in their classrooms and examining the challenges faced by them as they apply this approach. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of TBLT's applicability and effectiveness in under-researched academic contexts. To achieve these aims the following research questions are formulated:

- 1- What are EFL university teachers' perspective on utilizing Task-Based Language Teaching Approach in their classrooms?
- 2- What challenges do EFL university teachers face when implementing Task-Based Language Teaching Approach in their classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for understanding individual perspectives and the meanings they attach to their experience (Creswell, 2014). This type of research is used to uncover detailed insights that cannot be captured through quantitative research (Patton, 2015). It allows for studying “things in their natural settings, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). Thus, in this study the qualitative method is employed through interview to collect detailed, meaningful data about EFL university teachers perspectives of TBLT as well as the challenges they face while applying this approach.

Context and Participants

This study took place at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia, which offers a BA degree in English. This department provides a structured curriculum across eight semesters, during which students study a range of subjects that aim to develop their language proficiency and theoretical and practical knowledge in English. These subjects include core language skills (e.g., speaking and writing), courses in linguistics and applied linguistics (e.g. morphology, sociolinguistics), and literature courses (e.g. drama, novel and poetry). The teaching staff at this department are professionals who hold advanced degrees (either a Master’s or a PhD) in applied linguistics, literature, or related disciplines.

The participants of this study were selected by using non probability convenience sampling, which is often used in educational research to recruit participants who are accessible and willing to participate (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This type of sampling was appropriate for this study as it enabled the researchers to recruit participants who were readily available and could offer valuable insights in the use of TBLT in their classrooms. The sample consisted of seven teachers (one male and six females). Six of them held Master’s Degrees and one held a PhD. Their teaching experience is varied, ranging from two to more than ten years.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth exploration of participants’ perspectives on TBLT and their challenges of implementing this approach. This type of interview is also flexible to probe further based on the participants’ responses (Bryman, 2016). The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis method, following Braun and Clarke (2006) procedural framework. Firstly, the transcripts were thoroughly read and re-read by the researchers to become familiar with the data. Then initial codes relevant to the research questions were generated, and themes were developed through iterative refinement. Through this process, attention was given to both manifest and latent content of the participants’ responses to ensure comprehensive analysis of the data. Finally, the generated themes were organized and interpreted in relation to teachers’ perspectives on TBLT and the challenges they face as implementing this approach.

Research ethics were rigorously followed in line with ethical guidelines for educational research (Dornyei, 2007). Informed consent form was obtained from each participant, ensuring that she/he was fully aware of the study objectives and the voluntary nature of her/his participation. In addition, the participants were informed that their response would be confidential and used solely for this research study purposes. Permission to record the interviews was also obtained from each participant, and all recordings were securely stored to maintain confidentiality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following sections present and discuss the findings derived from qualitative data obtained from interviews with seven EFL teachers regarding their perspectives on TBLT. The findings are presented according to the themes generated during analysis and supported by excerpts from teachers' responses. Then they are interpreted and discussed in relation to the literature review.

Teachers Understanding of the Concept of TBLT

All the teachers were asked about their understanding of the TBLT, and their answers were varied. Most of them demonstrated that the main aim of TBLT is engaging students in real-life communication with a focus on fluency rather than accuracy. For example, T1 reported that "TBLT is about allowing students to engage in communication with a focus on practice use rather than just grammatical accuracy." Similarly, T7 emphasized the meaningful communication opportunities that TBLT approach offers to students. She said "task-based teaching involves creating real-world situations where students engage in problem solving and interaction." These findings indicate that most of the teachers have some theoretical knowledge about TBLT, especially about TBLT focus which is using language to communicate in real-life context (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 2004). These findings also align with Ellis' (2003) conceptualization of TBLT, which stresses that tasks engage students to use authentic language in practical real-world communication.

In addition, few teachers referred to the cooperative nature of the tasks employed in TBLT which foster collaboration and communication among the students. For instance, T1 said "I call it cooperative learning." He added that using this approach in the classroom would help students to tell each other about their topics and "exchange knowledge." T7 also stated that TBLT "is based on cooperative teaching and cooperative learning and teaching." These teachers conceptions of TBLT reflect their understanding of the cooperative nature of TBLT which corresponds with the social cultural theory of Vygotsky (1987) that emphasizes the importance of social interaction in enhancing language comprehension and production.

Moreover, one of the teachers described TBLT as a "store" of knowledge. This teacher said "Task-based teaching is, in one word, it might be a store ... it might be the word I would use to define task-based teaching because through it they can get the knowledge and store it in their mind." This unique definition suggests that TBLT assists students to learn new vocabulary and structures. This corresponds to the input theory of Krashen (1985), which hypothesizes that students, to learn language, need comprehensive input. This input would provide them with new vocabulary and structures that are beyond their level of competence. As they interact with each other they might comprehend and then internalize some of those new vocabulary and structures, and these new vocabulary and structures become part of their linguistic competence. Consistent with Ellis (2003), this definition reflects TBLT's focus on meaningful communication which promotes students' communicative competence.

However, few teachers expressed their limited knowledge of this approach. For example, T2 stated that "I don't have a fixed definition for a task-based learning ..." Correspondingly, T3 reported that "I have no idea about it before." These responses suggest that these teachers lack of knowledge about TBLT is likely a consequence of insufficient professional development training on TBLT. This aligns with the Sang and Loi (2023) review of research studies on TBLT in Vietnam which reveals that teachers need professional training to implement TBLT effectively in their classrooms.

Furthermore, Most of the teachers demonstrated misconception about the use of TBLT to teach the four language skills. These teachers reported that this approach is only applicable to teach listening and speaking and overlooked its potential for teaching reading and writing. For example, T4 said "it's suitable for speaking and listening ..." T7 also stated that "speaking and

listening are the obvious skills for TBLT, but when it comes to writing it is harder to design effective tasks.” Even those who understood that TBLT can be used to teach the four skills, they believed that it is more suitable to teach speaking and listening. However, TBLT can be utilized to teach the four language skills when tasks are appropriately designed (Willis, 1996). The teachers beliefs of using tasks to teach only speaking and listening might limit the full potential use of TBLT. Tasks, due their interactive nature, can be utilized to teach speaking and listening. They can also facilitate teaching reading through pedagogical input tasks and teaching writing through output tasks, such as collaborative writing (Ellis, 2009).

In short, the majority of the teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of TBLT focus on real-world language use and students engagement. Nevertheless, they had misunderstanding of its use in teaching the four language skills as they believed that this approach is appropriate only for teaching speaking and listening. This emphasizes the teachers needs for professional training to increase their knowledge of the principles and application of TBLT in their classrooms.

Benefits of Task-Based language Teaching

The interview data revealed that the teachers perceived TBLT as an effective approach for enhancing various aspects of language learning. A significant benefit remarked by the majority of teachers is that TBLT has a positive impact on students vocabulary learning and acquisition. T1, for example, noted that TBLT “helps them on building or helping them provoke their own knowledge of vocabulary.” T5 also emphasized that using this approach assists students in “gaining as much vocab as they can.” This teacher uses this approach only for teaching vocabulary. These results align with Ellis (2003) who argues that TBLT promotes incidental vocabulary learning through meaningful tasks engagement, and this allows students to internalize the meaning, pronunciation and spelling of the words in the context.

In addition to the vocabulary development, some teachers reported that TBLT participates in building students confidence, boosting their motivation and improving their communicative skills. T1 stated that this approach “helps in building or helping them having self-confidence”, while T4 observed that “this type of approach gives them the confidence to talk about what they think.” T6 also said this approach “encourages them and makes them feel interested to speak ... this is good for them.” These findings supports that TBLT enhances students confidence in using the target language, and prepares them for real-life communication (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004).

Another prominent advantages of TBLT cited by many teachers is that it increases students engagement in the learning activities. T4 reported that “a lot of the students don't even try to say something but this approach you can say put them in the corner to use their language even broken language but they are trying to express them themselves.” This indicates that this approach encourage even hesitate students to communicate. T7 also confirmed this by saying “TBLT allows students to try new expressions in realistic contexts, even their grammar is not perfect.” These findings support the idea that TBLT creates a helpful environment for students to practice their language without fear of making mistakes (Ellis, 2003). Such findings reflect the notion that TBLT provides students with opportunities to communicate meaningfully and promote active language use without focusing on accuracy (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). They also confirm one of TBLT main strengths, which is its ability to promote active learning (Nunan, 2004). These findings also clarify the nature of TBLT which encourages students to participate more freely as they engage with language in a meaningful way (Willis, 1996).

Additionally, few teachers highlighted the role of TBLT in developing students' critical thinking and creativity as they solve problems and make decisions during task completion. They also emphasized the positive impact of using this approach to foster their students cognitive

development. For example, T4 reported that “this approach helps students to think out of the box. I mean, developing the critical thinking.” T5 also argued this approach assists students to “concentrate on how to think and how to develop their ideas, then to think in a logical logically, of course.” These observations confirms Ellis’ (2003) argument that TBLT provokes students to employ their cognitive abilities as they analyze, synthesize and justify decisions during task execution.

In summary, these findings suggest that teachers view TBLT as a pedagogically valuable approach that increases their students vocabulary, confidence, engagement, and cognitive skills. Their perspectives are informed by their experiences of implementing this approach in their classrooms. These perspectives reflect the effectiveness of TBLT in promoting meaningful target language use in the classrooms and its role in facilitating language learning and acquisition.

Challenges of TBLT Implementation in Classroom

The teachers identifies several challenges in applying TBLT in their classrooms. The most frequently mentioned challenge is related to students proficiency level. Many teachers believe that this approach is only effective for upper-intermediate and advanced students. For example, T1 said “tasks that include high-stakes vocabulary related to subjects like science and literature can be challenging for some students.” T5 noted that some tasks “are above the level of students” and my students whose level is low cannot do these tasks. T6 and T7 also emphasized students proficiency level as critical for task engagement. These results reveal the teachers’ needs for better understanding of task adaptation to suit all levels of students proficiency. Ellis (2009) argues that TBLT can be adapted for all students proficiency level: simple tasks for beginners and complex ones for advanced students. Moreover, effective implementation of TBLT necessitates designing tasks that correspond to students’ linguistic proficiency (Ellis, 2009; Zhang, 2021). This is an area where teachers may need further training.

Another major difficulty mentioned by numerous teachers is the insufficient classroom time, which hinders task completion and impedes students engagement. T1 noted that the short-length classes prevent students from completing the tasks, particularly those tasks which need students to engage deeply with content. T5 said “TBLT is time-consuming, so I think it is a challenge for the goal of the classroom.” T6 briefly summarized the issue in these words: “because of the time, we cannot do it.” These concerns align with the scholars arguments that time is one of the challenges in preparing and implementing the tasks successfully in the classroom (Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2009). To mitigate these obstacles, teachers need to carefully plan their tasks and ensure that they can implement them carefully during the time available for their classes.

Moreover, some teachers identified large classroom sizes as a barrier to effective TBLT implementation. T6, for instance, complained that her overcrowded classrooms hinder her from implementing meaningful interactive tasks. However, scholars contended that TBLT can be adaptable to diverse classroom contexts. Willis and Willis (2007) emphasize that teachers can utilize tasks effectively in large classrooms when they receive training in task design and group management strategies. Furthermore, some teachers identified lack of instructional resources and material as a critical barrier to TBLT utilization. T5 said “there are not a lot of resources available for using TBLT.” T4 also noted that the instructional material are not practical for using tasks in their classrooms. This scarcity drives teachers to invest substantial time and effort in designing contextually appropriate tasks. Enough time and expertise in material design are highlighted by Ellis (2009) as requirements for effective implementation of TBLT.

Furthermore, some teachers referred to the misalignment between TBLT and exam-oriented education. They noted that their students prioritize exam preparation over engagement in communicative tasks. For example, T4 observed that “students think only in the exam,” and

they perceive that TBLT activities are irrelevant to prepare them for exams. This correspond with the finding of Zhang (2021) which is TBLT faces resistance because it does not prepare students for their exams. However, Ellis (2009) counters this view, arguing that TBLT can enhance exam readiness when teachers design effective focused tasks that meet their students exam demands.

Few teachers referred to students' motivation, interests and preferences as critical factors that impact the efficacy of using TBLT in their classrooms. T1 asserted that successful implementation of tasks depends "on what students love to do or the way they love to learn." T7 stressed the centrality of students' "attitudes and aptitudes" in fostering their engagement in task-based activities. These teachers also reported that students disinterest in the prescribed tasks hinders the implementation of these tasks. Thus, teachers need to integrate students choice in task selection to increase their motivation and engagement and create relevant tasks that suit students levels, needs, interests and preferences to ensure their participation in these tasks (Ellis, 2009).

In summary, the interview data reveal several challenges impeding successful TBLT implementation. These challenges are ranged from low students proficiency, insufficient classroom time, large classroom size, inadequate resources, exam focused culture to lack of students interest and motivation. By addressing these challenges, teachers can enhance the effectiveness of TBLT and create a more engaging and productive language learning environment.

The findings of this study reveal valuable insights into EFL teachers' perspectives on TBLT and the challenges they face in its implementation. While teachers generally recognize the benefits of TBLT, such as increasing students engagement and improving their communicative competence, they encounter several challenges, such as limited class time and inadequate resources for applying this approach in their classrooms. Addressing these needs would enhance the potential benefits of TBLT in EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study investigate the perspective of seven EFL university teachers on TBLT and the challenges they encounter when implementing this approach in their classrooms. The results reveal that the teachers recognize the value of TBLT in enhancing students communicative competence and engagement in practicing the language. However, some teachers have misconceptions about this approach, such as their belief that TBLT can be utilized only to enhance speaking and listening skills. Additionally, the results reveal numerous practical challenges in implementing this approach, such as insufficient class time, lack of resources, and students low level of proficiency. Based on these results, several recommendations are offered for teachers, educational institutions and educational authorities.

To enhance the successful implementation of TBLT, teachers should apply this approach with teaching all language skills. This can be achieved by designing tasks that suit students level of proficiency, needs and interests. Teachers should also engage in ongoing professional development to expand their theoretical and practical expertise of this approach. Moreover, educational institutions should allocate sufficient time and provide adequate resources to ensure that teachers and students can implement this approach effectively. Furthermore educational authorities should mandate the integration of this approach into the national curricula. They should also establish and fund professional development opportunities to enable teachers to implement this approach effectively.

This research study offers valuable insights into EFL teachers perspectives on TBLT. Nonetheless, it has some limitations, such as relying only qualitative interview data from a

small sample seven EFL university teachers, which may not fully represent the population of EFL university teachers in this context. Further research studies could employ mixed methods approach, integrating interviews with questionnaire, to collect qualitative and quantitative data from a large sample size. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of EFL university teachers perspectives on TBLT and their challenges of implementing this approach.

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