

Original Paper

Factors Affecting Task-Based Language Teaching from Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Teachers play the most important part in the application of a new method or approach in English language education. However, whether they implement the method successfully or not depends on various factors. This paper aims to explore the factors that affect English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' implementation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) at the tertiary level through the use of two instruments: "focus-groups" with five experienced EFL teachers and interviews with ten individual teachers at five universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The findings revealed that factors affecting teachers' implementation of TBLT include external factors such as time allocation, testing, students' motivation and English proficiency and textbooks, and internal factors such as teachers' experience, knowledge about TBLT, English proficiency, and ability to use technology. The findings of the study provide EFL curriculum designers and teachers with both theoretical and practical implications in the implementation of TBLT at the tertiary level in Vietnam.

Key words

task-based language teaching, implementation, external factors, internal factors, tertiary level

1. Introduction

During the past three decades, attitudes towards language teaching have changed from the traditional grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods towards communicative language teaching (CLT) and TBLT (Nerlicki, 2011). As a result, EFL teachers have been trained and encouraged to employ TBLT in order to motivate English learning and develop English students' competence. TBLT aims to provide students with a natural context for language use. When language students work together to complete tasks, they have different opportunities to interact with each other. Researchers think that such interaction facilitates language acquisition as meaning is negotiated (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Vietnam, like other EFL contexts, has experienced a variety of methods and approaches of English teaching and learning, from traditional grammar-translation method to CLT and TBLT, especially at the tertiary level, EFL teachers have employed different methods in their teaching. However, so far not

many studies have investigated whether EFL teachers have been successful in their teaching or not, and what factors affect their teaching. Thus, this study aims to explore what factors affect EFL teachers' application of TBLT at the Vietnamese tertiary level.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Task-Based Language Teaching

TBLT stems from constructivist learning theories. Accordingly, students are expected to convey meaning and messages rather than a specific form or pattern. According to constructivist learning theories, a) knowledge is constructed by students based on prior experience and understanding; b) learning is the search for meaning by linking prior knowledge with new experience; c) students work actively in groups with self-reflection; and d) teachers are facilitators and co-constructors of knowledge with students through inquiry (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010, pp. 60-61).

These assumptions indicate that learning is not viewed as a passive process of absorbing information transmitted by a teacher. Rather, students actively seek to make sense of new experiences and new information through the filter of their purposes, interests, prior experiences, and knowledge (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010). In addition, Richards & Rodgers (2001); Norris (2009) & Richards & Schmidt (2010) have emphasized that TBLT integrates theoretical and empirical foundations for good pedagogy with a focus on tangible learning outcomes in the form of "tasks". Therefore, tasks are considered as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. Also, Cook (2008) & Willis & Willis (2001) indicate that in TBLT, learning and teaching should be organized around a set of communicative tasks and tasks are carried out in the target language.

2.2 Language Tasks: Definitions

The definition of a task has developed over the three decades through empirical studies in classroom practice. Different definitions based on perspectives of pedagogy and real world are mentioned in (Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1988, 2004; Willis, 1996; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Cook, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Branden, 2006; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). For example, Nunan (1988, 1996, 2004) defines a task as a piece of classroom work which involves students in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form; Bachman & Palmer (1996) indicates that a task is an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation; Cook (2000) defines a task as inherently authentic; the focus is on 'getting the job done', in associations with work; and Richards & Rodgers (2001) define a task as an activity or goal that is carried out using language. A task is considered as a central unit of planning and teaching.

Although different terms are used in various definitions, all the definitions do have major elements in common. Accordingly, a task requires students to *use the target language*. By using the target language, students can acquire it. When solving the task, students have to use their previous knowledge, any language form and vocabulary, and any learning strategies. Another part of these definitions is that a

task has emphasis *on meaning*. The instruction focus is not on forms, functions, vocabulary, sound, but on the meaning of what is expressed. The third part of these definitions is that a task must require students to *achieve a goal* which is set before they perform the task. The last part is that a task must *be authentic*. Task authenticity helps students to use the language in real-world contexts.

2.3 Language Tasks: Types and Framework

Meaning-focused activity in the classroom can be divided broadly into three types: a) *Information-gap activity* involving a transfer of given information from one person to another; b) *Reasoning-gap activity* involving deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns; and c) *Opinion-gap activity* involving identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation (Prabhu, 1987 & Griggs, 2005). Moreover, any type of task when being carried out, according to Richards & Rodgers (2001) & Willis (1996), should follow the procedure as mentioned below.

2.3.1 Pre-Task

The teacher introduces the topic and situation and gives clear instructions on what and how the students are going to do at the task stage and may also present useful words or phrases but will not pre-teach any new structures. The teacher helps the students understand the objectives of the task. This stage is also considered the preparatory stage for the task-cycle stage.

2.3.2 Task-Cycle

This stage includes task, planning, and reports.

Task: To carry out the task, students work in pairs or groups using whatever knowledge of language they can recall to negotiate the task. The teacher facilitates the task, monitors and encourages the students but avoid correcting any mistakes or errors of form at this stage.

Planning: The students prepare oral or written reports to tell the class what the outcome was. During the time of presentation, the teacher takes notes of mistakes and corrects their language. The emphasis is on clarity, organization, and accuracy as appropriate for a public presentation.

Report: The teacher asks some pairs to report briefly to the whole class so every student can compare the findings, or other pairs or groups will have comments. The teacher also gives comments, but gives no public correction.

2.3.3 Language Focus

Language analysis: The teacher sets some language-focused activities based on the text the students have read or heard. The students analyze the language with a focus on form.

Language practice: Based on the language analysis work, the teacher conducts some practice activities for the students to practice the language.

In the light of literature, it is inferred that TBLT means having the students do tasks. Through the performance of tasks, the students are involved in using the target language, and thus they will reach the set goal in the process of language learning and teaching.

2.4 Language Tasks: Reasons to Use

Since the mid-1980s, second and foreign language researchers have focused on researching tasks because of several reasons. *First*, researchers think that tasks provide context for negotiation of meaning and better opportunities for language learning to take place. *Second*, learning, as Shehadeh (2005) states, is promoted by activating acquisition processes in language students. Meanwhile, TBLT provides a context that activates these processes. Therefore, language development is seen as the outcome of natural processes, which does not focus on language form, and so language learning is not inhibited (Prabhu, 1987). *Third*, Willis & Willis (2001, 2007) indicate that the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging students in real language use in the classroom. Nunan (1989) & Griggs (2005) emphasize that the use of authentic communicative tasks based on real life situations permits students to develop the communicative skills required to function in the real world. *Fourth*, tasks require interaction between language students. When students have interaction in small groups, they become more autonomous and more involved in the learning process. Spada, Lightbown & White (2005) indicate that students who are engaged in second or foreign language (S/FL) interaction with a focus on meaning can, at the same time, progress in their knowledge of the vocabulary, syntax, and morphology of the L2. *Finally*, why tasks are chosen is, as Cook (2008) indicates, when a task is carried out, the language must come from the students themselves, not from the teacher. What the teacher has to do is introducing the task, eliciting the language that the learners need, monitoring and facilitating their performance, and assessing what they have done.

2.5 Affective Factors

Effective language teaching and learning depend on a variety of factors related to teachers, students, learning environment, materials, and many other factors. Strevens (1989, as cited in Bailey (2006) has identified three constraints on excellent language teaching: a) institutional conditions such as materials, equipment, class size, the mix of students in the classroom, and hour of instruction; b) students' factors such as prior knowledge, intention to learn, motivation, interest and attention; and c) the teachers themselves such as teachers' knowledge, experience, pedagogy and commitment. Among many components related to teachers' implementation of innovation, language proficiency is a major component in the subject matter knowledge of language teaching. Insufficient language proficiency may lead to anxiety in using the target language as a medium of instruction. In addition, Inbar-Loure (2005) indicates that non-native language teachers will vary in their feelings of confidence regarding their language proficiency in the target language. What is more, Bailey (2006) emphasizes that teaching requires time and professional commitment, as well as high quality pre-service and in-service training programs. In addition to factors relating to teachers themselves, other factors affecting teachers' implementation of innovation also exist. Norris (2009) indicates that large class sizes, minimal contact hours, non-interactiveness of students, exam-driven learning, and other impediments are regularly cited as justification for not engaging in TBLT.

In this study, the author classifies affective factors into two groups: a) External factors which means the

factors that do not stem from the teachers such as students' motivation or textbooks; and b) Internal factors which means the factors that stem from the teachers themselves such as teachers' knowledge or experience. The main purpose of the current study is to investigate both internal and external factors affecting English teachers' implementation of TBLT in the Vietnamese tertiary English classes.

3. The Study Context

This study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. It focused on the teaching of EFL to non-English major students at the tertiary level. The EFL curriculum for those students covers the four enabling skills and is also called "integrated courses". This type of curriculum exists in all universities in Ho Chi Minh City. That is why all EFL teachers have to participate in the implementation of the EFL curriculum. After decades of employing different methods or approaches of teaching English, currently, CLT and TBLT are the major concern at the tertiary level in Vietnam. Nearly all EFL teachers at the tertiary level are trained to apply CLT or TBLT at their universities, so more or less they have to apply TBLT in their English classes. The current study was conducted with the teachers within the context of teaching EFL to non-English major students.

4. Statement of the Problem

In general education as well as in language education, especially in EFL settings, a variety of factors may affect teachers' teaching effectiveness. So far researchers have pointed out that EFL teachers have encountered problems in their teaching such as student's low English proficiency, teachers' non-native English proficiency, mixed ability classes, students' lack of motivation and many other problems (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Wang & Cheng, 2009; Dang, 2006). However, whether or not, in the EFL settings of the Vietnamese tertiary level where TBLT is being applied, teachers cope with any problems, it is necessary to invite them to raise their perceptions about their teaching.

Before the researcher conducted this study, all of the EFL teachers who participated in the current study were invited to attend a workshop on TBLT organized on 14 June, 2013. During the workshop, several components related to TBLT were discussed, including what TBLT is, what its purposes are and how tasks are carried out in an English class. After six months of implementation of TBLT in different English classes at five different universities, the researcher decided to investigate what difficulties or challenges these teachers faced in their teaching, what factors affected their teaching, and what needs to be changed so that they will get more success in TBLT.

5. Research Questions

The current study aimed at investigating the factors which affect EFL teachers during the implementation of TBLT in the tertiary English classes. The current study tried to answer the questions as listed below:

a. What external factors affect teachers' implementation of TBLT in their EFL classes?

b. What internal factors affect teachers' implementation of TBLT in their EFL classes?

6. Participants

Employing purposive sampling, the researcher chose five EFL teachers who were in charge of the EFL curriculum to conduct a “focus-groups” discussion and ten other EFL teachers were chosen randomly in order to collect qualitative data. All of these participants were from five universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. They are experienced teachers and are applying TBLT in their English classes.

7. Instruments

The purpose of the study is to investigate factors affecting the implementation of TBLT at the tertiary level from teachers' perspectives. To collect data, the researcher employed two types of instruments. First, “*Focus-group*” was conducted with five experienced teachers in order to identify what factors affected their implementation of TBLT. Second, after several factors were identified, *semi-structured interviews* based on eleven predetermined questions were conducted with ten teachers from five universities to get more details about affective factors.

8. Data Collection and Analysis

Focus groups are a form of group interview. The reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, first, before the discussion, one open-ended question “What factors affected your implementation of TBLT in your English classes?” was raised. The participants interacted with each other rather than with the researcher. It was from the interaction of the group that the data emerged. When the discussion was taking place, the researcher tried to keep the group discussion targeted on the topic (Mackey & Gass, 2005), listened and took notes of what the participants raised. The discussion lasted about one hour. Later, the researcher summarised the data and made a list of affective factors and then asked the five participants to reconsider the data. Second, according to Cohen, et al. (2007), focus groups develop themes, topic and schedules flexibly for subsequent interviews and/or questionnaires. Therefore, in order to get more details about the affective factors, eleven predetermined questions were asked to investigate factors that affected EFL teachers' TBLT implementation. Each interview lasted 15-20 minutes. The language used in the interviews was English. The researcher had a sheet of paper with eleven questions for each interviewee. All the answers were recorded at the same time when each interview took place. After that all the collected data were given to the participants to review and approve the data.

For analysing the data collected from “Focus groups”, the researcher used thematic analysis to identify the factors raised by the participants. The affective factors were put on a list and then the participants reviewed it. After that, the participants and the researcher decided to cross out the factors which did not affect teachers' TBLT implementation very much. For analyzing the data collected from the interviews,

the researcher also employed thematic analysis to identify themes in the data. The data were separated into small units. Each unit was considered as a subtheme and based on each question of the interviews. All the data were rearranged in order, i.e. external and internal factors respectively. The teachers were coded as T1, T2 ... T10 and their perceptions were put under each theme or topic.

9. Results of the Study

9.1 Results of "Focus groups" Discussion

The teachers taking part in the discussion reported that the factors affecting TBLT consist of *external factors* including class size, textbooks, time allocation, and students' achievement tests, English proficiency level and motivation; and *internal factors* including teachers' knowledge about TBLT, teaching experience, English proficiency, training and ability to use technology.

9.2 Results of the Interviews

9.2.1 Results of Research Question One: External Factors

Class size

Most of the teachers said that there are about 50 students in their classes and with this number of students, the class size is not appropriate for TBLT.

T6: I don't like the size of my class. There are 49 students in my class. I cannot ask many students to have presentation at the last stage of a task.

T7, T9 and T10 indicated that they could not check whether every student took part in the discussion or not because each group had 5 or 6 members.

Students' achievement tests

All of the interviewees indicated that achievement tests actually have effects on their implementation of TBLT. They have to teach to the test. They said that achievement tests are designed by the head of the department. They use banks of multiple-choice questions for the end-of-term tests.

T1, T2, T3, and T7 indicated that at their university, English tests for the non-English major students are multiple-choice questions to test the students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, not for speaking skills.

Textbooks

According to some teachers (T3, T4, T8 and T9), textbooks are one of the most important elements in the process of teaching and learning.

T1: The textbook we are using includes different types of tasks, so I do not have any problems designing tasks.

T3: In the textbooks at my university, there are tasks for the students to practice and improve their language knowledge and skills.

T4, T8 and T10 noted that the textbook covers some uninteresting reading topics and monotonous writing tasks. The tasks are not authentic. Also, the students are not interested in carrying out the tasks because they are too long and difficult for them.

T8: The textbook for the non-English major students at my university is the “Headways”. Tasks are not very clear and some tasks are not suitable for every student. They are too difficult.

Time allocation

All the teachers indicated that limited time is a challenge. The time is insufficient for them to implement a successful lesson with learning tasks. The syllabus does not allow them to let students talk or write freely for long.

T1: In TBLT, students have freedom to communicate with each other so if the time is limited, they cannot fulfill the task in an effective way.

T3: In my context, sometimes I don't have enough time to allow students to express their ideas, solve a problem or argue with their friends about an issue. I must dictate to the syllabus.

T5: The time is insufficient for implementing learning tasks, especially tasks requiring the students to write. The department puts a lot of pressure on me to finish the textbook.

Students' English proficiency level

All the teachers said that if the students have a good previous knowledge of language, they will be willing to participate in performing tasks. As a result, the lesson will be more interesting.

T1, T3, T6 and T5 indicated that weaker students may get anxiety with hard tasks and more able students will get bored with easy tasks.

T2: The classes I am teaching are mixed ability classes. The students' English proficiency varies. Therefore, it is hard for me to put the students to work in groups or pairs.

T4: At my university, the students' needs were not identified at the beginning of the course, so students with different levels of English study together. It is really hard to organize tasks for learning.

Students' motivation

The interviewees indicated that the students who are more motivated will learn better than the less motivated ones.

T1: In my class many students cannot say anything in a discussion. It seems that they do not want to learn.

T2 and T5 indicated that if the students have no motivation, they feel indifferent to activities relating to their real life.

T4: The students will be motivated if they are cared for by the teacher and get clear instructions of what they have to do.

T10: Several students in my class lack motivation, they did not pay attention on the teacher's demonstration and never fulfilled the tasks given.

9.2.2 Results of Research Question Two: Internal Factors

Teachers' knowledge about TBLT

All the interviewed teachers thought that teachers' knowledge about TBLT is very important. Understanding clearly about TBLT helps teachers know how to design, carry out and adjust tasks to suit their students' levels of English.

T1, T3, and T6 considered that knowledge about TBLT is very vital. This helps teachers organize their lessons relating to both language acquisition and language pedagogy.

T2 and T7: If teachers are not familiar with TBLT, they cannot design tasks or carry out tasks in the classroom in a full or effective way.

T10: In my opinion, a good knowledge about TBLT helps teachers design different and relevant tasks in the class to meet the purpose of the lesson and thus encourage students' work.

Teachers' teaching experience

Teaching experience helps teachers in many ways. For example, an experienced teacher knows how to select appropriate activities for students' different levels. Also, experienced teachers know how to motivate students and monitor them during the lesson.

T3: I have been teaching for long. My experience helps me make assumptions about students' levels. I choose appropriate activities and tasks in order to motivate each student.

T5: I think students are different, so I sometimes have to adjust the way of teaching to suit them.

T6, T9 and T10 indicated that an experienced teacher is efficient in dealing with different types of learners, and inspiring the learners.

Teachers' English proficiency

Most of the interviewees considered teachers' proficiency as the most important factor that helps teachers to implement TBLT in their English classes.

T1: To me, teachers' language competence has been rated as the most essential characteristics of a good teacher. It can help the teacher fulfill the pedagogical requirements of TBLT.

T9: I think teacher's English proficiency allows teachers to satisfy learners with different levels. The teacher can apply alternative structures and explanation to achieve his/her goals.

T10: I do not know why my students sometimes do not understand my instructions, so I have to use mother tongue to explain.

Teachers' training

Among the ten teachers interviewed, only four teachers were taught by TBLT at university. The others were not taught by TBLT at university. Therefore, they found it difficult to carry out TBLT.

T2: I was not taught by TBLT, but I have attended several workshops since 2005. The workshops were run by foreign and Vietnamese experts. I think in-service courses help teachers update their knowledge of TBLT and skills of teaching. They have chance to exchange experience and discuss problems with each other.

T3: I was not only taught by TBLT at my university, but I also practiced teaching using TBLT before I graduated, so I find it interesting to teach my students by TBLT and the students are also motivated.

T5: I graduated nearly twenty years ago so I was not taught by TBLT. I try to apply TBLT, but sometimes form-based teaching still dominates my teaching.

Teachers' ability to use technology

All the teachers indicated that computer-assisted teaching really helps them with their application of

TBLT.

T1 and T3 indicated that they ask their students to submit their assignments by e-mail so that they can correct mistakes.

T8: I give my students assignments. They have to prepare the language at home for the task for next time. They also have to access the Internet to get information.

T9: I design my lessons on slides so it is convenient for my students to follow. The task is more interesting and thus attracts students.

10. Discussion

The findings of the research revealed that factors affecting teachers' implementation of TBLT are various. They are external and internal factors. Both have positive and negative effects.

Regarding the external factors, the interviewees indicated that class size can affect teachers' implementation of TBLT. If the class size is not very large, there will be a great support to teachers in implementing TBLT because it is easy for teachers to organize group work. What is more, because of the need to prepare students for grammar-based tests, teachers have to spend considerable time teaching test-taking skills or drilling students on multiple choice grammar items. In regard to textbooks, the interviewees stated that textbooks with uninteresting and irrelevant tasks or activities make students feel bored or stressed when doing tasks. Tasks that are not authentic and appropriate for students' levels of proficiency also cause obstacles. Besides, EFL teachers have to bear pressure to complete the syllabus or the textbook selected for the programme. The time allotted to the course is insufficient for them to implement a successful lesson with learning tasks. They thought that tasks must take time and students must have sufficient time to work in groups to express their ideas or solve problems together. In addition, the teachers reported that students' English proficiency and motivation decide the success in carrying out tasks. Also, students with a good previous knowledge of English do tasks better. Meanwhile, weaker students feel anxious when taking part in discussions or presentations. All the interviewees also stated that mixed classes cause obstacles. It is hard for weaker students to do tasks. As a result, they are usually not motivated in a task-based lesson. Therefore, they are unwilling to participate in doing tasks. On the contrary, more motivated students will learn better than the less motivated ones. If the students have motivation, they will invest efforts to take part in doing tasks.

Regarding internal factors, all the interviewees indicated that teachers' knowledge about TBLT is very important. If teachers are not familiar with TBLT, they cannot design tasks or carry out tasks in the classroom in a full or effective way. Moreover, according to the interviewees, experienced teachers know how to select appropriate activities for students' different levels, motivate students and monitor them during the lesson. If a teacher is experienced, he or she will apply his/her own professional skills to inspire the learners. What is more, teachers' English proficiency can help teachers fulfill the pedagogical requirements of TBLT. Teachers with high level of English proficiency will set a good example for students to follow. On the other hand, teachers with low English proficiency will cope with

difficulty in carrying out instructions, specially in TBLT. Another factor which the teachers think also affects their implementation is teachers' training. A teacher who was taught by TBLT at university face fewer problems in their class compared to the ones who were not. Also, the interviewees thought that in-service training courses help teachers increase their knowledge about TBLT and pedagogy. In order to support TBLT in an English class, the interviewees also stated that being familiar with technology is necessary. TBLT requires students to interact with each other by using the target language. If the allotted time is insufficient, one of the feasible ways is to ask the students to interact with each other by email or use software for learning languages.

In summary, the findings of the current study support previous studies (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Carless, 2003; Wang & Cheng, 2009; Hadi, 2013), which indicated that many factors affect EFL teachers' teaching performance or innovation. To get success in implementing TBLT in the Vietnamese context, EFL curriculum designers and teachers should consider which factors promote or hinder the teachers' implementation of TBLT.

11. Implications and Conclusion

The findings of the current study provides EFL curriculum designers and teachers at the Vietnamese tertiary level with practical implications in the implementation of TBLT.

First of all, the findings of the study suggest that the size of the class should be smaller with fewer students. Also, it is necessary to instruct teachers how to deal with mixed ability classes. Mixed ability classes do not really cause problems if teachers know how to put students into groups and give different assignments to different students.

Second, the findings of the study also suggest that teachers should have more care about the students' attitudes and beliefs by setting the objectives for each task, lesson and course. Also, the teachers should show the students the benefits of learning a new language and the importance of English in the world of jobs. If learners need to speak a foreign language in a different social situations, they will see the value of what they are learning and will therefore be motivated to acquire the language. In addition, varying the activities, tasks, and materials can help to avoid boredom and increase students' interest levels (Lightbown & Spada, 2001; Müller-Hartmann & Ditfurth, 2010).

Third, a good selection of textbooks is vitally important. If the textbooks are not designed for TBLT, or the tasks in the textbook are not authentic and appropriate for the students, it will not be easy at all for both teachers and students to carry out tasks, especially in the Vietnamese context. Curriculum designers should know that, according to Mishan (2005), in order for tasks to be authentic, they should be designed to approximate real-life tasks and activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture. Also, (Van Patten, 2004; & VanPatten & Benati, 2010) indicate that language input cannot be meaningful unless it is comprehensible. Acquisition can only occurs when learners are able to understand most of what the speaker or writer is saying. Theory is sometimes vague and difficult to understand, so practicing designing tasks is necessary if there are not many tasks in the

textbooks.

Fourth, students have different levels of English proficiency so it is necessary to analyse students' language needs and they should be grouped by proficiency levels in English classes. In addition, a change to designing achievement tests should be made. Performance tests should be designed to evaluate students' communicative competence.

Fifth, the findings of the study suggest that teachers and students should have sufficient time to carry out learning tasks, so administrators should distribute time suitably to each unit or course. If teachers always face pressure to finish the textbooks, they only gallop over the task or the lesson.

Finally, the findings of the study suggest that in-service training courses need to be held frequently not only for teachers to understand about TBLT but also for them to develop their professional skills as Richards & Farrell (2005) indicate, opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work.

In conclusion, TBLT is a new language teaching approach in the Vietnamese tertiary English classes. Although Vietnamese teachers of English have welcomed it positively and have partly succeeded in the implementation, they should know that limitations and hinderances to the implementation of TBLT still exist. In order to improve students' English competence, administrators and teachers have to make efforts to overcome these obstacles in the years to come.

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Appendix

Questions for Interviews

External Factors

- Q1. How do you think the class size has influence on the implementation of TBLT?
- Q2. How do the achievement tests affect your teaching performance?
- Q3. Are the textbooks of the EFL curriculum at your university appropriate for TBLT?
- Q4. Is the time allotted to each unit enough for you and your students to achieve the objectives of the course satisfyingly?
- Q5. What influence do your students' English proficiency have on your teaching?
- Q6. How does students' motivation affect your application of TBLT?

Internal Factors

Q7. How does your knowledge about TBLT affect your application of TBLT?

Q8. How does your teaching experience affect your application of TBLT?

Q9. How does your English proficiency affect your application of TBLT?

Q10. Were you taught by task-based language teaching at university? Do you think in-service teacher training courses help you improve your using TBLT?

Q11. How does computer-assisted teaching affect your TBLT? Are you familiar with computer-assisted teaching?