
A Study of Localization of Task-Based Language Teaching in China¹

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Abstract

In view of a series of challenges since Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) was introduced into China, we interviewed 14 front-line teachers in primary and secondary schools about their viewpoints and classroom strategies of TBLT. The results show teachers' willingness to use TBLT. They adopt flexible teaching procedures, apply TBLT creatively, and explore task-based language assessment. The authors argue for inclusive non-doctrinaire approaches to TBLT, and propose to construct localized TBLT theory and practice with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: task-based language teaching, localization in China, teachers in primary and secondary schools

1. Introduction

Over the past 15 years, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been applied in primary and middle schools in China as a requirement of the national curriculum standard. In 2003, the National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (experimental draft) promulgated by the Ministry of Education explicitly proposed to use the TBLT approach in English classrooms. After 14 years, the Ministry of Education issued the National English Curriculum Standards again in 2017, mentioning the core competence and activity approach to English teaching, proposing teaching activities and evaluation based on core competence. The new curriculum standards continue to highlight the language use abilities and adopt holistic tasks in language teaching and evaluation. TBLT arises and is developing in China, as

¹ This study was supported by the National Social Science Funding Project in China (16BYY080).

elsewhere, “largely in reaction to a broad consensus that had emerged around what were seen as shortcomings in teacher-centered, form-oriented second language classroom practice” (Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009).

This article explores TBLT innovation from the perspective of teachers. We adopt the following as the working definition of tasks and TBLT. Task is defined as “an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001). There are two ways of using tasks in language teaching: task-supported language teaching and task-based language teaching (Ellis, 2003). The former is simply incorporating tasks into traditional language-based approaches to teaching, while the latter treats tasks as units of teaching in their own right and designs whole courses around them. We use TBLT as a cover word to refer to both cases. The methodological procedures for task-based lessons involve three principal phases: the first phase is “pre-task” and concerns the various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they start the task; the second phase, the “during task” phase, centers around the task itself and affords various instructional options; the final phase is “post-task” and involves procedures for following up on the task performance. Only the “during task” phase is obligatory in task-based teaching. (Ellis, 2003)

TBLT is now considered as a “new orthodoxy” (Littlewood, 2004; Dai & Liu, 2004). However, in daily classrooms, it is said that most teachers still use traditional didactic teaching methods, and that TBLT is only a gimmick when dealing with the teaching inspection, teaching contests and open classes, since a series of factors hinder the implementation of TBLT in authentic classrooms. Is this true? When it comes to promoting the use of tasks in the foreign language classroom, the teacher is a key figure. In this article, we first review the literature of problems encountered in the implementation of TBLT and then report our interviews with 14 front-line teachers in primary and secondary schools in Jiangxi Province in China about their use of TBLT, including their understanding of TBLT, their practice and their strategies in dealing with tasks.

2. Challenges Encountered in Implementation of TBLT

Problems encountered in implementing TBLT mainly arise from the foreign language (FL) teaching context in China, while TBLT originates from second language (SL) teaching contexts (Carless, 2007; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012). TBLT focuses on “learning by doing” rather than cramming students with language knowledge and skills in traditional teaching. “Doing” is a process of accomplishing tasks, which is social interaction embedded in holistic, goal-directed activities. This kind of activity is seen as the means for deep-level language learning. Traditional foreign language teaching in China focuses on language knowledge accumulation and basic language skills, while TBLT emphasizes language communication and the use of language knowledge and skills to achieve communicative functions (Richards & Rodgers, 2008). Foreign language teaching in China is mainly teacher-centered, while TBLT is student-centered. TBLT emphasizes the multilateral interaction between teachers and students, and among students (Zheng, 2006).

Indeed, there are many factors that complicate the introduction and implementation of

TBLT in EFL classrooms (Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012). Shehadeh and Coombe (2012) group these factors into three types: institutional factors (comprising, amongst others, issues like class size, official exam pressure, available materials, and mixed-proficiency classes), teacher factors (e.g., teachers' beliefs and subjective theories on language teaching, their need to control what goes on in the classroom, their interactive skills), and student factors (e.g., their beliefs about effective language learning, their preferences for certain methodological formats, their level of assertiveness). To summarize, the challenges encountered in implementing TBLT in China mainly include classroom culture, language context, exam-oriented instruction and learning, and lack of theoretical integration of TBLT.

In terms of classroom culture, there exist huge cultural differences between Western cultures and traditional teaching in China. TBLT focuses on students' language output, whereas traditional language teaching emphasizes language input of teachers and textbooks. TBLT is rooted in the classroom culture where students can participate in democratic discussion and are given full play as individuals. The traditional Chinese classroom is a teacher-fronted, orderly, and well-disciplined environment. As Bjorning-Gyde, Doogan, and East (2008) explain, "learners bring with them a complete set of understandings about teaching and learning framed by Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC), which is at points in conflict or at variance with Western notions" (pp. 78-79). They go on to observe:

The emphasis of the Chinese cultural model of learning English may be described as "transmission" which relies on mastery of knowledge and rote-learning of rules and meanings. The emphasis of the Western model, by contrast, may be described as "acquisition." This learner-centered model focuses on interactive engagement, learner autonomy, and the development of communicative skills. (Bjorning-Gyde et al., 2008, p. 80)

In an essentially "Chinese cultural model," "task-based teaching may prove to be in conflict with traditional educational norms" (Carless, 2007, pp. 596). TBLT encourages students to express their personal opinions, while traditional teaching in China favors students who are submissive and disciplined. Likewise, TBLT takes language use as a teaching aim while teachers in China focus on the teaching of language knowledge and skills. Furthermore, TBLT is task-driven for language acquisition, while English teaching in China still focuses on grammar-based content (He, 2014). Hence, when we use TBLT, it must challenge the classroom culture and language learning beliefs of the teachers and students.

In terms of language context, TBLT originated from a second language context. In China, English is taught as a foreign language, which lacks a natural environment for students' acquisition and usage. There are significant differences between second language teaching and foreign language teaching, particularly at schools in rural areas. In the case of second language acquisition, language plays an institutional and social role in the community. In contrast, foreign language learning takes place in settings where the language plays no major role in the community and is primarily learned only in the classroom. The distinction between second and foreign language learning settings may be significant in that there will be radical

differences in both what is learned and how it is learned. In the second language context, informal learning occurs, and learning is considered to result from direct participation and observation without any articulation of the underlying principles or rules. In contrast, foreign language learning is held to take place through conscious attention to rules and principles and greater emphasis is placed on mastery of “subject matter” treated as a decontextualized body of knowledge. Research indicates that complex rules cannot easily be taught, and classrooms do not offer sufficient input for them to be learned naturally (Gass, 1987; Liu, 2013). Recent research on TBLT in China reinforces some of the challenges of introducing TBLT in a mass school system (Zhang, 2007). In TBLT, much attention is focused on communicative purpose and outcomes, or language functions. But in China, classroom learners often fail to develop much functional language ability, where the target language is perceived primarily as an “object” to be mastered by learning about its formal properties. Consequently, when introducing TBLT to languages curriculum in foreign language teaching context in China, it is necessary to innovate in the realization of TBLT.

Foreign language teaching in China is constrained by an exam-oriented education culture. Sometimes, teachers give up TBLT to cater for college entrance examinations to raise the enrollment rate, because oral communicative competence addressed by TBLT is not included in the senior high school entrance examination or *Gaokao* (college entrance examination). Also, while the administration explicitly advocates using TBLT, teaching quality is measured according to students’ test scores. It is difficult for teachers to balance between TBLT and traditional teaching methods (Wu & Pan, 2012). TBLT emphasizes language use in context, while examinations mostly test language knowledge and skills on paper. Task-based assessment is hardly applicable to college entrance examination, so TBLT has to give way to test-oriented teaching.

In China, most of the research on TBLT remains in the introduction of its theories or imitates the foreign practice directly. The theoretical integration and practical innovation of TBLT are not enough (Liu, 2005). In particular, university teachers, as the main force of research, are rarely involved in TBLT. Researchers and practitioners lack effective communication with each other. The awareness of the localization of TBLT model is weak, especially in the construction of theories combined with local practice (Li, 2015).

In view of these problems, some scholars think that TBLT is not appropriate in China. But others put forward proposals for adaptation and localization rather than simply dismissing it (He, 2014; Ji & Tang, 2009; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012; Wu, 2013; Zheng & Borg, 2014). Zheng and Borg (2014) found that young teachers display the strongest commitment to the principles of TBLT in the curriculum, while the more experienced teachers introduce a stronger formal element of grammar into their lessons than recommended by the curriculum. Shehadeh and Coombe (2012) found that the accounts of successful implementation of TBLT do not appear to be geographically bound: they are reported in Asian, Venezuelan, and French EFL classrooms. A possible repercussion is that adaptations of TBLT may involve some form of merging the global with localized methodologies (Littlewood, 2011). However, up to date, little is done about what adaptations are made and what localization strategies are employed by

practitioners in China's classrooms. Hence the present study was undertaken to fill the gap in the research of adaptations and localizations of TBLT by teachers in China.

The research questions of this study are: 1) Do young teachers accept and utilize TBLT in their FL classrooms? 2) How do they overcome challenges in using TBLT? 3) What changes are made when adopting TBLT in the English classroom?

3. The Study

Based on problems encountered when localizing TBLT, we conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 14 front-line young teachers in primary and secondary schools in summer 2016. The background of these teachers is shown in Table 1. They all obtained degrees in English and attended the part-time master's program at a university, and their teaching experience was 2-8 years. The interview questions mainly included teachers' understanding of TBLT, whether they applied it in the classroom, how effectively TBLT is being utilized in their FL classrooms, what challenges may need to be overcome and what changes should be made if TBLT is to be more effective in their own teaching. We transcribed the interview recordings, and the data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach that employed further focused codes, super codes, and families of codes to explore connections and generate theoretical hypotheses, which are discussed in the findings below.

Table 1. Information of 14 interviewed teachers

Participants	Gender	Teaching level	Area
1	Female	Junior high school	Urban
2	Female	Senior high school	Urban
3	Female	Senior high school	Urban
4	Male	Senior high school	Urban
5	Female	Junior high school	Urban
6	Female	Primary school	Rural
7	Male	Junior high school	Rural
8	Female	Junior high school	Rural
9	Female	Junior high school	Rural
10	Female	Senior high school	Urban
11	Female	Primary school	Urban
12	Female	Primary school	Urban
13	Female	Primary school	Rural
14	Female	Primary school	Rural

4. Findings and Discussion

In general, the data showed that the teachers had good understanding on TBLT in a certain aspect and knew that it is advocated by the new curriculum standards. We analyzed interview data and generated theoretical hypotheses which were discussed in the findings below: (1) change of traditional classroom culture and teachers' acceptance of TBLT; (2) designing appropriate tasks for students to create a natural learning environment; (3) changing exam question types and exploring task-based language assessment; (4) integrating TBLT with traditional teaching; (5) practical innovation of TBLT.

4.1 Change of traditional classroom culture and the extent of teachers' acceptance of TBLT

In the data, many teachers made the statement that traditional classroom culture had been changing since China's policy of opening up to the outside world and that they were willing to adopt TBLT in their classroom, despite the problems encountered in the Chinese context. According to them, TBLT has clear teaching aims and is students-centered; thus, it can improve students' participation and promote the development of students' thinking ability and comprehension ability. Some teachers expressed their experience:

When we organize tasks in class, students are very active. They are very willing to express themselves if we give them opportunities. (#8)

Rigid traditional teaching methods are becoming less and less used. TBLT method is flexible, and it can meet students' needs. (#12)

As to whether TBLT is suitable for the Chinese classroom, the teachers believe that although the classroom cultures are different, and their teaching is exam-oriented, they are willing to try TBLT. They think that TBLT is a challenge to the Chinese tradition—obedience of the students, dignity, and authority of the teacher based on the Confucius and Mencius tradition. However, now students are developing fast. They have richer information sources, and there are higher demands on teachers, while the classroom culture is also undergoing subtle changes. They welcome new teaching method attempts in that they have an opportunity to show their abilities. In order to meet students' needs, teachers find it necessary to try new methods in their teaching, as shown in the following statements:

From the perspective of students, the TBLT method is in line with students' physical and mental development. Students need more chances to express themselves. The key is that we teachers should try as much as we can to offer them the chances. (#9)

TBLT can stimulate students' inner motivation, fully demonstrate their abilities, so we are willing to try this new approach. (#6)

They also recognize:

Older teachers seldom use the TBLT method, while younger teachers use it more often. (#7)

I think that the atmosphere of class in TBLT is better than other teaching methods. (#14)

The data suggests that even the teachers in rural areas are willing to accept TBLT in their teaching. On the one hand, teachers in China have an open mind to embrace the new ideas and approaches in the world, perhaps due to the policy of reform. Students have also changed. They are not silent in the classroom anymore, but are more active in expressing their ideas. This is contrary to the conjecture of some scholars.

On the other hand, the acceptance of TBLT by the teacher and students may be because they know the disadvantages of traditional teaching methods, which promote accuracy over fluency, individual or independent work over pair- and group work, and reliance on rote-learning over taking risks through speaking, as favored by TBLT courses.

4.2 Designing appropriate tasks for students to create natural learning environment

In China, English is learned as a foreign language, and students lack the environment of using English naturally, but they also like to use the language if teachers create such an environment. Using TBLT, teachers can provide students with opportunities to use English in a near-authentic environment. From the interview data, we can see that teachers try to design tasks to simulate informal learning through direct participation and observation. It is found that lower grade students are more willing than higher grade students to participate in tasks.

The common tasks they use in the classroom include games, role play, picture talk, filling blanks in meaningful context, retelling, and discussion. Primary school teachers expressed their preference for TBLT by saying:

I often use tasks in my classroom, like games and role play. Students like them very much. They can learn English through different activities. (#11)

Some teachers use TBLT in review classes and find that the atmosphere is better than traditional teaching in helping students master language knowledge in near-authentic conditions. Others make use of tasks to distinguish difficult and ambiguous grammar points, such as past tense and present perfect tense.

It is possible to design different tasks for senior high school students as long as you scrutinize it. I find tasks are good in review classes because the aim of this kind of class is to master and use language items learned before. And tasks are excellent in this aspect. (#10)

Teachers should help students promote their learning as a guide. When I find my students silent in doing speaking tasks, I often join the group, help them solve the problems they have, and encourage them in different ways. (#1)

It seems evident that if teachers design different tasks for different levels of students and for different learning purposes, students would be willing to participate in the tasks and enjoy using English in a near-authentic environment. Similarly, if teachers help students solve problems, they are more motivated to fulfill the tasks.

Since tasks can create near-authentic situations to use the language, teachers use TBLT to motivate students to learn English. This is very important because when motivating students, the teacher is showing his humanistic concern for the students, and this is an indispensable part of English teaching.

4.3 Changing question types of exams and exploring task-based language assessment

The exam-oriented education makes it hard to use TBLT in daily classes. Influenced by such education and teaching schedule, teachers have to teach in the traditional grammar-translation way. For example, some teachers expressed why they chose traditional methods:

In public classes, we use the TBLT method. But before the exams, we return to the traditional teaching method because using TBLT needs more time, and it is hard to keep the teaching schedule. (#9)

Due to the pressure of test scores, schools and teachers have to adjust the teaching schedule and teaching methods. But the good news is that the test items in *Gaokao* have changed since 2016 in Jiangxi Province. There are no longer multiple-choice tests of grammar and vocabulary. Instead, grammar and vocabulary are tested in the form of cloze tests which test language use in context. The entrance exams in senior high schools also reduced the test items of multiple-choice of grammar from 15 to 8. The wash-back effects of these reforms in exams can be seen in classroom teaching and teachers' change in beliefs:

Since the exams have changed, we should not teach language items in isolation. Instead, we should teach holistic language use in context and encourage students to use language in real life. TBLT is good in this aspect. (#2)

To avoid the separation of teaching and testing, teachers are also exploring task-based language assessment. Some teachers would give grades to students' task performance, and the grades are included in students' final scores. Meanwhile, some teachers pay more attention to language use when designing final exam test papers. This is implied in the report of one senior high school teacher:

I design the writing tasks in a different way. Writing tasks (in the test paper) have not only titles but also contexts that are closely related to life. For example, writing a letter of apology to the teacher when failing to submit an assignment. (#3)

In this regard, teachers may lack the skills to work with assessment tasks. It is desirable to provide support and guidance for teachers in designing tasks and evaluating tasks. Like other humanistic subjects, holistic learning and testing is the most important way of examining learners' ability to express their values, their critical thinking, and their communication.

4.4 Integrating TBLT with traditional teaching

As for the procedure of TBLT in the classroom, most teachers know Willis' (1996) three teaching phases (pre-task, mid-task, and post-task), but they do not strictly stick to these procedures. Instead, they adjust teaching procedures according to specific class aims. According to the interview data, the TBLT approach does not contradict the traditional teaching method. The traditional teaching method is teacher-centered, using the 3P (presentation, practice, and production) model or the five-step model. This kind of teaching method is relatively feasible for passing on language knowledge. In their actual class, teachers use both traditional teaching methods and TBLT methods together, such as using the 3P model with task elements. For example, some teachers (#5, #14) would add task elements to traditional language explanation, dividing the teaching process into four phases: task presentation, task preparation / language learning, task completion, and task reflection (also see Lu, 2003). Other teachers (#9, #10) revise the five-step teaching method: lead-in, input of language materials, language practice, task implementation, and language focuses.

During the interviews, the teachers explained that input or task preparation is mainly explanation of text, new words, and grammar, which is the traditional focus. Post-tasks phases are teacher reflection and peer evaluation. In the actual classroom, the teacher usually adjusts their time in different phases according to teaching aims and lesson characteristics. It seems that these teaching procedures are the localized TBLT model in China, for example:

It is difficult to use the TBLT method during the whole course. Sometimes we still use the traditional method to teach but use tasks when applying language points. (#10)

TBLT sometimes really needs to be used in conjunction with traditional teaching methods, such as designing proper repetitive or form-focused exercises. (#8)

Traditional teaching methods still have advantages in acquiring language knowledge, transmitting cultural awareness, and cultivating humanistic spirits. (#4)

Many teachers mentioned that they would add task contents after using traditional teaching to check students' performance in class. In fact, TBLT makes high demand on teachers' qualifications, so pure TBLT is difficult to implement. They think that traditional teaching still has advantages in teaching language. Teachers do not want to use the TBLT method to replace the existing teaching model but combine it with language use in class. This is why TBLT must be localized.

It is interesting to find how teachers localized TBLT teaching procedures. They employed the TBLT procedure flexibly and sometimes added task reflection and evaluation in the teaching procedures. This is necessary because such timely feedback can provide help for students in improving their task performance, especially in writing tasks.

4.5 Practical innovation of TBLT

In practice, teachers innovate in using TBLT to meet the needs of Chinese learners. According to the data, the teachers also use TBLT in grammar teaching and after-class language use. For example, some teachers use focused tasks to check students' understanding of language points after traditional teaching. As one teacher said,

I would design a future setting after teaching “be going to” structure to give students a chance to perform the task using the structure. (#4)

Some tasks can be assigned to finish after class, like observing parks and practicing “there be” sentence pattern. My pupils like this kind of task, and they can make sentences like “there is a lake in the park.” (#13)

Due to limited class time, space, and tools, some tasks could be arranged outside the class. Students can prepare well after class, so that tasks can be completed efficiently in class.

Some tasks (e.g., simulation) need space and tools to accomplish. It is difficult to do them in the classroom, so the tasks have to be done after class. (#7)

Tasks like debates often take a long time to prepare and need much time when doing them, so tasks cannot be frequently used in class. But students can do the tasks after class. (#2)

The data suggest that in foreign language context, teachers can create near-authentic language use context in many ways and apply tasks creatively. For example, some teachers create “English Corner” for students after class, and encourage students to watch original English videos and have international communication on the internet. Usually, teachers make clear requirements of tasks for students and check the outcomes of the task in class. In this way, it could be argued that the teachers perceive, refer to, and make use of the TBLT literature not as “scientifically proven final answers” on how to teach (or how not to teach), but rather as “provisional specifications” for pedagogical options and choices that are in line with research evidence (East, 2012).

5. Localization Strategies of TBLT and a Framework for Designing and Implementing Language Learning Tasks in China

It is evident from our investigation that young teachers accept and utilize TBLT in their FL classroom. While acknowledging that implementing TBLT in China is challenging as shown

above, it must be mentioned that there are numerous cases and experiences which demonstrate success stories of TBLT implementation. Regular teachers tend to modify tasks and TBLT in countless ways in order to adapt in individual classroom contexts to better match teachers' understandings about effective teaching. The major strategies they employ to localize tasks include the following:

- designing holistic tasks as a supplement to discrete learning in the classroom;
- attempting to teach functional English to supplement form-focused learning;
- using tasks to motivate students in learning English;
- making use of pair and group work of tasks to supplement individual or independent work;
- encouraging students to take risks through speaking instead of relying on rote-learning of rules and meanings;
- integrating TBLT with traditional teaching by using a flexible teaching procedure;
- exploring holistic task-based language assessment by using more interactive and productive tasks necessary for language development.

Teachers' decisions on what to teach and how to teach it are made on a lesson-by-lesson basis and are influenced by student expectations and institutional factors. In China, institutional factors exert an important influence. The 2017 new curriculum standards stated that the goal of English language teaching is to cultivate core competencies of language abilities, cultural awareness, thinking abilities, and learning abilities in our students. These core competencies are realized through an activity approach to English teaching. For practical purposes, the teachers resorted to what the researchers, following Mellow (2002), refer to as "principled eclecticism" – making choices among a range of approaches to fit the context, but in a way that was informed by knowledge and understanding. This is consistent with Andon and Eckert's (2009) study that "It is entirely appropriate that teachers should treat ideas and proposals for TBLT as provisional specifications in this way." (pp. 306) This reality is reflected in Carless's (2007) finding that several participants highlighted the need to adapt TBLT so that it became "an eclectic compromise" or TBLT "with local characteristics" (pp. 600).

TBLT with Chinese characteristics can be summarized in the cultivating English language abilities through TBLT, with the aim of key competencies of humanistic spirit. This is embodied in the 2017 new curriculum standards and reflected in the adaptation and innovation of TBLT in English classroom by the practitioners. TBLT is localized in the Chinese context by considering genre as both activity type and language learning processes. This localization process can be illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 provides a crude localization process of devising and implementing suitable tasks for foreign language learners. The place of *task* is central to the framework. Tasks have communicative objectives and outcomes, just as genres are seen as having communicative purposes. The role of genre in task-construction would appear to need some justification as it is by no means universally accepted. Genre is the activity type linguistically realized in text. What textual form a situation type will take is realized by a particular text type that is specified in terms of its genre (e.g., a specific legislative proposal or bill), with its often highly stylized

language. In developing English courses, the access routes for the designer is to determine genres through discourse analysis (Swales, 2009, p. 42), that is, to determine particular domains and situations of language use. A task-driven methodology thus keeps an appropriate focus on rhetorical action and communicative effectiveness, however much the *means* to those communicative ends may involve, in various ways and to variable extents, the analysis and discussion of text and situation, and the teaching and practice of form. On the other hand, implementing TBLT also involves what teachers know of foreign language-learning processes. China's long tradition of language learning and institutional factors may influence teachers' designing and implementing tasks. Predominantly, the language learning process is deemed to be form-focused and rote learning of rules and meaning. Hence, the actual devising of suitable tasks is shown in the figure as being moderated on the one side by considerations of genre and on the other by what we know of foreign language-learning processes.

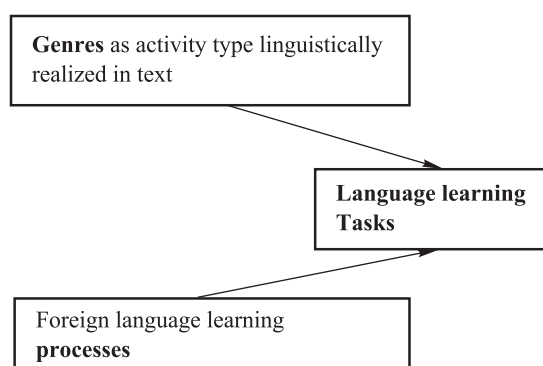


Figure 1. A framework for designing and implementing language learning tasks in China

6. Conclusion

Like anywhere, the China task-based innovation experience constitutes a unique social, cultural, geographical, and educational context. Yet despite traditional classroom culture, language context, exam-oriented instruction and learning, etc., the voices of the informants reveal their wisdom in their teaching. They are willing to accept and utilize TBLT, and they overcome those challenges by designing appropriate tasks for students to create natural learning environment, adopting flexible teaching procedures, applying TBLT creatively, exploring task-based language assessment, and integrating TBLT with traditional teaching. They adopt non-doctrinaire approaches to TBLT, and construct localized TBLT practice with Chinese characteristics. The localization process is moderated on the one side by considerations of genre and on the other by what they know of foreign language-learning processes. In other words, the practitioners make changes when adopting TBLT in English classroom, and experiment with tasks in sophisticated ways, in the effort to make their language teaching more functional, more usage-based, and more powerful, aiming to cultivate students' English language abilities and core competence.

The main implication of this study is that the implementation of TBLT appears to be

feasible in FL context of China as evidenced by the interview findings. Yet, there are a number of limitations to the study. First, the complexity of teaching activities needs to be better understood, particularly when there are different versions and understandings of TBLT. Perhaps the methodology these teachers employed was characterized as “task-supported” rather than “task-based” in that the communicative tasks were introduced to promote interaction but were not treated entirely as units of the syllabus. Research tools need to be developed that are sensitive enough to discern such differences across teachers. Another key undertaking for future research concerns the factors which influence teachers to choose TBLT. Indeed, TBLT can provide new learning experiences, but the relationship between TBLT and learning efficiency is still unknown. It will be important to explore how TBLT may contribute to language learning in a foreign context.

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