Unpacking Perceptual and Contextual Influences on Task-based Instruction:
A Framework of Teacher Beliefs and Practice

Nguyen Van Loi
Can Tho University
Can Tho City, 900959 Vietnam
Email: loinguyen@ctu.edu.vn

Abstract

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is one of the contemporary approaches which attracts a vast amount of research in the past decades. Research on the dissemination of TBLT, however, has provided abundant evidence of hindering factors in various educational contexts, especially in Asian cultures. Two major groups of factors were reported. One is directly associated with the teachers, namely their language proficiency, understanding of TBLT, and beliefs about language pedagogy. The other group involves the social, cultural, and educational forces which indirectly militate against the teachers' implementation, including assessment policy, large mixed-ability classes, social accountability, and instructional time constraint. This situation reflects an existing gap between what second language acquisition research has to say and classroom realities, in which the teacher plays a crucial bridging role. The current paper draws on studies on TBLT published within two to three recent decades to argue that teachers' belief is a key mediator of their practice which interacts with their classroom experiences and contextual factors. Based on this position, the paper attempts to depict a conceptual framework that captures the interaction to provide

implications for future research and work on EFL teachers' education and development.

Introduction

In the policy of many countries, innovative pedagogical approaches such as task-based learning (TBLT) have been promoted (Butler, 2011). The diffusion of the task-based approach in these settings, however, has unveiled a divide between "two different forms of discourse" on which SLA research and classroom practice operate (MacDonald, Badger & White, 2001, p. 950). Rahman and Pandian (2016) have recently stressed that research findings are not realistically applicable and/or accessible. Even though TBLT is claimed to be grounded in psycholinguistics and SLA research (Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009), the approach has, in practice, encountered obstacles especially in Asian settings.

The challenges of TBLT have led to various reactions or suggestions. One suggestion was a flexible adaptation of TBLT to educational contexts (Carless, 2003, 2004). Another reaction was to synthesize the challenges (e.g., Cao, 2018), or use case studies to gain further insight into challenges in pedagogical shifting (e.g., Phuong, 2018) in order to provide temporary pedagogical implications. Advocates of TBLT (e.g., Harris, 2016) also examined successes and failures from the teacher perspective to suggest measures that make the challenges "less arduous" (p.112). These studies, nonetheless, fail to depict a general framework of interactive factors that mediate TBLT implementation, which could offer further insights and implications for future work.

An updated research has particularly reiterated the impact of teacher beliefs on TBLT implementation (Zhang & Lou, 2018). The current paper thus aims to unpack the interactive influences of teacher beliefs and contextual factors on TBLT diffusion, and attempt to sketch a socially situated model of teacher beliefs and

practice. This model hopefully provides further insight into English pedagogy innovation, teacher education and future research in Vietnam and similar contexts. To this end, the paper draws on the conceptual framework of teacher belief and practice (Borg, 2006), research results of major studies on teachers' implementation and beliefs regarding TBLT, and the educational contexts of Vietnam and similar ones.

Task-based Language Teaching Principles

To understand the challenges TBLT has encountered, a brief recapture of principles underlying this approach is essential. TBLT is predicated on the contemporary view of language as integrated, holistic discourse in communication (Foster, 1999; Holliday, 1994, Long & Crookes, 1992; Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009**)**, and the psycholinguistic processes of second language (L2) acquisition (Ellis, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, 2001). Unlike most previous language pedagogical approaches, it assumes that L2 learning takes place not in the order the target language (TL) segments are broken down and presented as in traditional syllabuses no matter how carefully teaching is organized, simply because learners follow their own natural route of acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Foster, 1999; Van den Branden, 2006). TBLT advocates a natural, organic, process-oriented approach to learning, as opposed to a strictly mechanical, behaviourist view underpinning many traditional methods (e.g., Grammar Translation, Audiolingualism, to name a few). Thus, TBLT is identified as a perspective (Brown, 2001), a logical development (Littlewood, 2004), or family member (Nunan, 2004) of communicative language teaching or, "communication-oriented language teaching" (Littlewood, 2004, p. 326).

Various task-based interpretations have emerged over decades (e.g., Long, 1983, 1996; Long & Crookes, 1992; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). At a curricular level, TBLT uses tasks as units of planning and teaching drawing on the interactional framework (e.g. Long & Crookes, 1992; Prabhu, 1987). Methodologically, TBLT incorporates task sequence in an

instructional cycle of three stages namely pre-task, task cycle, and post-task (e.g., Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1996). Although these approaches differ from one another, they are typically "based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.223). A task-based approach "seeks to engage learners in interactive, authentic language use. By performing a series of tasks, learners "both acquire new linguistic knowledge, and proceduralize their existing knowledge" (Ellis, 2007, p.2). The most central tenet of a task-based approach is, therefore, the task in which language is contextualized and processed, and motivation is generated by a target outcome achievement (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Shehadeh, 2005; Willis, 1996); language knowledge is constructed through task-based social interaction (Ellis, 2000; Lantolf, 2000).

Such a language learning perspective is ascribed to a strong view or version of task-based instruction (Skehan, 1996; 2003). In contrast, a weak version (Skehan, 1996) or task-supported teaching (Ellis, 2003) treats tasks as an integral part of language instruction, but only use them for communicative practice (Adams & Newton, 2009; Ellis, 2003), preceding and following which a focused instruction of certain linguistic features may be conducted (Skehan, 1996). This version "could also be compatible with a traditional presentation, practice, production sequence, only with production based on tasks" (Skehan, 1996, p.39).

Critical to TBLT is the concept of task which has provoked various interpretations (e.g., Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001; Van den Branden, 2006). Shared features of a task, however, include a primary focus on meaning, some resemblance to real-world tasks, a clearly defined outcome or communicative goal, engagement of cognitive processes and integration of language skills (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2007). Central to the task-based activity must be learners' use of TL as a medium of communication (Van den Branden, 2006) "in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express their meaning" (Nunan (2004, p.4).

Due to its primary focus on communicative meaning, TBLT is classified as a meaning-focused approach as opposed to traditional form-focused instruction. A strong emphasis on communication, as criticized, may encourage task-based learners to pay focal attention to meaning at the expense of linguistic form, thus producing fluent but inaccurate language ability (Foster, 1999; Skehan, 1996). This concern has urged TBLT proponents to return to form in a less conventional way, namely an incidental focus-on-form, an approach that stresses instruction of forms that arise from the learner needs for them in communication (Long, 1996). On the other hand, a traditional approach called focus-on-forms, preselects a form to teach explicitly either deductively or inductively with an aim to support learners to use the form in their communication.

TBLT also advocate manipulating task characteristics and conditions purposely and selectively to develop learner accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Skehan, 1996), or alternatively leading learners through cycles of planning, implementing a task, and comparing it with native speaker performance (Willis, 1996) in which attention is drawn to linguistic forms. Furthermore, the distinction between unfocused tasks which focus on communication only, and linguistically focused tasks which "elicit the uses of specific linguistic features" while maintaining an attentional focus on meaning (Ellis, 2003, p.141), has rendered TBLT less radical and more complex to practitioners. Therefore, the concept of tasks incorporates a broader sense than communicative tasks, the so-called communicative activities in CLT (Skehan, 2003).

The teacher's role in task-based classrooms also becomes more complex than in traditional classrooms (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Teachers facilitate, monitor and advise rather than dominate and control learners in their learning process and language use. Task-based learners mainly have to take more responsibility than waiting to be 'spoon fed' (Nunan, 2004). Although TBLT is not necessarily learner-centered (Ellis, 2003), learners are expected to actively participate in learning activities

organized around tasks, working preferably with peers in the learning process. This role adoption is not familiar to Asian students who are familiar with the traditional transmission or lecture-based style. On the other hand, the teacher may feel they lose control and do not take their responsibility because they are paid to teach.

Besides, TBLT is claimed to be a multifaceted approach, allowing for a creative and flexible design by deploying a diverse range of materials, textbooks, and technologies for the ESL and EFL classrooms (Oxford, 2001), and thereby better cater for contextual demands (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Nonetheless, both Ellis (2003) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) noted that the social, cultural, political, and historical context were seldom considered in TBLT implementation. It is in this respect that TBLT has faced reactions due to long-standing teacher beliefs and practices which have been contextually established (Borg, 2006).

Factors Mediating Communicative Task-based Language Teaching

Abundant research has recognized some benefits of task-based instruction, namely learners' increased satisfaction with learning (Kaplan & Leaver, 2004; Lopes, 2004), increased strategic competence (Kaplan & Leaver, 2004), changed beliefs about language learning (Lopes, 2004), collaborative learning beyond individual abilities (Muller, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), and learner development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Diapora, 2005; Johnston, 2005). Nevertheless, TBLT opponents such as Swan (2005) consider the belief in better language learning achievement rendered by TBLT than previous traditional approaches to be misleading.

The remaining, and perhaps most debatable issue is the extent to which TBLT is applicable or relevant to Asian countries, where the communicative approach has faced challenges over the past decades (e.g. Anderson, 1993; Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004), and been reduced to a weak version like the presentation, practice and production model (Holliday, 1994;

Van den Branden, Bygate & Norris, 2009). A considerable body of studies across Asia has spotted practical issues, highlighting the interconnection of perceptual, social and cultural factors in which teacher beliefs appear to play the key role of change.

Teacher knowledge and beliefs about language pedagogy and TBLT

Research across Asian contexts has revealed teacher-related factors such as their language ability, understanding of TBLT, and beliefs about language pedagogy as major barriers.

Teacher language proficiency

From a review of 14 countries, Ho (2004) identified teacher inadequate English proficiency as an impediment to the dissemination of communicative teaching methods in East Asia. In various school contexts, Jeon and Hahn (2006) confirmed that South Korean EFL teachers had limited English proficiency which mainly caused them to avoid TBLT. Similar findings were discovered in Japan and Hong Kong (Butler, 2005; Butler, 2011; Li, 1998). As Littlewood (2007) concluded, insufficient English ability may result in teacher lack of confidence to address unpredictable needs arising in CLT classrooms. But it is noteworthy that while this is a crucial factor, its impact depends upon individual teachers. Most studies reported this difficulty at the primary and secondary school level. For university EFL instructors, English proficiency is not necessarily a barrier (e.g., Nguyen, 2011; Barnard & Nguyen, 2014).

Teacher understanding of TBLT

Teachers' surface understanding of TBLT also influences their implementation. In fact, this was the most important reason why many Korean teachers were reluctant to conduct task-based activities (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). It also limited school teachers' implementation of task-based curricular innovations in Hong Kong (Clark et al.,1999, as cited in Adams & Newton, 2009), Mainland China (Cheng & Wang, 2004; Zhang, 2007), and South

Korea (Li, 1998). Nguyen, Le and Barnard (2015) found Vietnamese teachers lacked a thorough knowledge of TBLT, which caused them to focus on forms rather than meaning. Van Loi (2011) similarly found that the Vietnamese EFL instructors in his study tended to manipulate tasks to focus students' practice on certain linguistic forms targeted in their lessons.

Teacher pedagogical beliefs

Teacher knowledge of TBLT seems to be outweighed by teacher beliefs about language pedagogy which has been contextually shaped over time. Although many Korean teachers understood TBLT, they rejected it because of the time and exam pressure, the need for classroom management, and their beliefs in grammar instruction (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Jeon and Hahn (2006) further observed that Korean secondary school teachers lacked trust in the linguistic effect that TBLT claims to have.

The Thai EFL tertiary teachers could grasp the communicative approach tenets, but attributed the educational system, students, and learning culture, to their avoidance (Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2006), which highlights the impact of teacher contextually-shaped mind set. Todd (2006) further reported three reasons why the Thai EFL university instructors in his study switched from a pure task-based English-for-academic-purpose syllabus to a mixed methodology that involved traditional explicit instruction. Two of the reasons were concerned with teacher beliefs in teaching grammar and in the appropriateness of TBLT to limited proficiency students.

In Vietnam, Barnard and Nguyen (2010) reported alongside espousing communicative principles, Vietnamese teachers found the necessity for explicit grammar teaching. They feel the need to prepare grammar for students before task performance (Nguyen, Le & Barnard, 2015). Nguyen (2014) also observed that Vietnamese teachers' practice is built around particular language forms, and reveals a lack of focus on meaning aligned with TBLT, which reflects a deep belief about form-focused instruction. Undoubtedly, teachers' beliefs about language pedagogy plays a

key mediating role, and interact with contextual factors to impact teachers' practice (Borg, 2006).

Educational, social and cultural factors

Research across different settings report similar findings about the effect of educational, social and cultural factors on TBLT implementation.

Educational features

An issue that confronts EFL teachers across Asia regards the educational policy and conditions. One key hindrance is the psychological burden of form-focused examination. Asian teachers as reported in the literature are caught between the need to prepare students for exams and the top-down policy to conduct communicative task-based language teaching. Many studies have found the pressure to prepare students for norm-referenced, form-focused tests as well as national high-stakes tests prevented teachers from communication-focused teaching in many contexts namely Mainland China (Hu, 2005a, Liu, Mishan, & Chambers, 2018), Hong Kong (Carless, 2003, 2007; Deng & Carless, 2009), South Korea (Li, 1998; Shim & Baik, 2004), Japan (Gorsuch, 2000), and Vietnam (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Canh, 2008). Liu, Mishan and Chambers (2018) stressed that the public examination system was one of the main barriers to TBLT implementation in China. Carless (2007) emphasized that multiple-choice testing formats administered by external assessors made Hong Kong school teachers return to explicit instruction. This finding echoes what Canh (2008) observed about curricular innovations in Vietnam where multiple-choice tests in the General Education Diploma Examination and University Entrance Examination restricted teachers' teaching of language skills designed in the English textbooks.

Hu (2005a) found the effect of high-stakes testing more salient in less developed areas of China where the teachers had to adopt explicit instruction to prepare students for standardized testing, whereas in developed regions, teachers had the right to

develop curricula to meet the increasing demands for English proficiency, so their teaching was more communication-oriented. Littlewood (2007) identified this issue as a failure of assessment policy "to keep pace with other developments in the curriculum" (p.245). Adams and Newton (2009), however, noted that communication-oriented assessment would not necessarily lead teachers to enact tasks in language classrooms because they may still think old ways of teaching are more appropriate. Carless (2007) has pointed this out in Hong Kong secondary contexts, implying that the wash-back effect of testing seems to be far a complex matter. It is obvious that examination policy is one of the factors mediating teachers' beliefs and practice.

Instructional material is also matter of concern for teachers in many Asian countries. The Korean teachers reported that their textbooks were not supportive of task-based instruction (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Carless (2003) encouraged Hong Kong teachers to consider tweaking textbook contents to integrate tasks. While it is observed that textbook-based instruction is a popular practice in Asian countries (Canh, 1999; Pham, 2000), research evidence shows that using textbooks as an agent of change may not be effective. Canh (2008), for example, found that even though the new English textbooks focused on four language skills, Vietnamese school teachers still taught lessons in their accustomed ways, claiming that the books could not change their teaching approach. With this observation, he concluded that teacher beliefs should be the focus of change. By the same token, Thai EFL teachers returned to explicit grammar instruction as a way of negotiating a purely task-based syllabus with the need for grammar instruction in the pre-task phase or separate lessons to prepare students for task completion (Todd, 2006). Teacher existing beliefs about language pedagogy again appear to be a strong mediator. This factor is what Freeman (2002) called the "hidden side" of teachers that teacher educators and developers should consider.

Alongside is the multi-level proficiency of students in large classes which, as blamed by many teachers, also limits task-based

instruction. Many Asian classrooms are commonly organized in volume and age rather than proficiency levels (Adams & Newton, 2009). Consequently, teachers had difficulty in selecting, designing and organizing communicative activities to cater for the various student levels. In Vietnam, expatriate teachers reported this problem in teaching English (Bock, 2000). EFL teachers in many studies also expressed a concern for the relevance of TBLT to low-proficiency students (Canh, 2008; Jarvist & Atsilarat, 2004; Li, 1998; Todd, 2006).

The student proficiency level explains why a Mainland Chinese teacher was frustrated and returned to grammar exercises as "many students just sit there idling their time" (Li, 2003, p.76). It also accounts for the excessive L1 use reported by school teachers in South Korea (Lee, 2005), Hong Kong (Carless, 2004), and Mainland China (Li, 2003). Eguchi and Eguchi (2006) observed that their students even switched to Japanese for simple verbal exchanges, which could have been done in English. Learners' impoverished and minimal use of English on task also worried many teachers in Hong Kong (e.g., Carless, 2004; Lee, 2005). Instead of using communication strategies for meaning negotiation as claimed by the theory of TBLT, students only tended to use simple strategies like prediction that involved little demands on language (Lee, 2005), a criticism regarding the effectiveness of TBLT raised by Seedhouse (1999). Adams and Newton (2009) further remarked that "learner reluctance to speak in class may then undercut the value of interactive and production tasks for language development" (p.8). To solve the problem, teachers are encouraged to place students of different language abilities in groups (Sachs, 2007), but this suggestion should consider the fact that competition and group cohesiveness are characteristic of Asian cultures (Hofstede, 1986). These values may challenge a constructive and cooperative learning perspective, and implicitly influence teachers' beliefs about TBLT.

Social factors

Another factor that strengthens teacher attitudes towards TBLT is the investment of time on task preparation and conducting tasks within classroom time restriction. While instructional time restriction fails to support Chinese teachers in Denmark educationally (Bao & Du, 2015), time involves a social dimension as well because it relates to income and workload.

In some Asian contexts, teachers are underpaid, leading them to "take a second or even a third teaching job" (Yu, 2001, p.196). This may discourage them from preparing and enacting tasks because doing so means more time investment and pressure (Hui, 1997). Because of economic instability and low salaries, many English teachers in Uzbekistan had to do extra work, thus they invested less time and energy in new methodologies (Hasanova & Shadieva, 2008). Although in other contexts the economic factor was not reported, insufficient class time was a major factor for teachers' avoidance of TBLT, for example, in Korea (Jeon & Hahn, 2006), and for teachers' returning to explicit approaches in Thailand (Todd, 2006). In Vietnam, teachers' low income requires them to teach extra classes or take extra jobs, which definitely is an essential mediator to consider. Carless (2003), in contrast, referred to Hong Kong primary teachers' heavy workload as an impediment to their preparation of tasks and teaching materials, but he further concluded that it was overall not a main hindrance, because textbook publishers have supplied suitable task-based materials.

Interacting with time and income is the need for social accountability. EFL teachers may feel discouraged from providing communicative tasks which are believed to be neither worthwhile nor satisfactory for parents and students who were more concerned about passing the national examinations (Carless, 2003; Cheng & Wang, 2004; Gorsuch, 2000; Li, 1998). Swan (2005) observed that three-to-four-hour lessons per week pressed teachers to teach the linguistic knowledge required for examinations (Swan, 2005).

Last but not least, teachers have voiced ideas about the affordance of an overall socio-cultural environment, or a TL environment available which could motivate Asian students to study for communicative competence. As Nishino and Watanabe (2008) indicated, much as in other Asian contexts, the substantial difficulty facing Japanese EFL teachers is the absence of a communicative environment outside the classroom.

The social factors seem to mediate teachers' practice of TBLT in different ways, depending on the support of social settings. However, time seems to play a mediating role in teacher change which normally confronts them with challenges in pedagogy, high workload, and social accountability in terms of examination results.

Cultural values in teaching and learning

Classroom management additionally influences teacher decisions to enact TBLT, which further fortifies teacher educational beliefs affected by cultural values. Research has indicated that discipline and order are necessary in Asian schools, where many teachers feel that noise from a communicative task-based activity may affect neighboring classrooms (Carless, 2004; Li, 1998). There is an inherent challenge for teachers to manage large classes (Li, 1998; Yu, 2001) if they are to conduct task-based lessons because of the burden in controlling interaction and noise (Littlewood, 2007). In several studies, teachers have voiced this concern (Carless, 2002; Li, 1998; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). In this respect, Littlewood (2007) argues, the PPP model is in favor because it not solely allows the teacher to teach the TL but also gives them control over classroom interaction. As Carless (2009) observed, this model "appears to be more easily understandable, more manageable, and provides a clearer teacher instructional role" (p.62), which explains why teachers prefer it to TBLT. Adams and Newton (2009), in contrast, suggest that large class sizes may be a problem when interactive tasks are used, rather than listening, reading and writing tasks. It could be argued that teachers

interpreted TBLT as restricted to interactive tasks which clash with their beliefs about an orderly class atmosphere.

Rooted in the need for managing discipline and order is the cultural value regarding teacher-student relationship cited as one of impediments (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Many Asian societies place importance on a hierarchical order and respect (Hofestede, 1986), and a deferential attitude towards teachers, which could undermine students' confidence to take initiatives as required by CLT (Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004). This relationship leads teachers to take an authoritative and transmitting role aligned with a transmission conception underpinning the teacher-fronted mode that many Asian teachers are familiar with (Hu, 2005b). This approach conflicts with the learner-centered approach to learning generated by TBLT (Bock, 2000; Ellis, 1996; Hu, 2005b; Rao, 1996). Although it is advisable that teachers and practitioners adapt rather than adopt a new approach (Bax, 2003; Canh, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Li, 1998; Lee, 2005; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004), arguably, educational conceptions need to be impacted and shifted before a methodological shift can start. The assumptions and values underlying TBLT are likely to conflict with the prior knowledge, beliefs and experiences of EFL teachers who are probably still accustomed to transmission teaching style, and a discrete-item teaching perspective such as the PPP procedure.

Summary

A review of research on TBLT implementation has unveiled the confrontation of both cognitive and contextual influences as noted by critics (e.g. Foster, 1999; Swan, 2005), and in a broader view, underscored the challenges in reconciling SLA research with classroom practice, particularly with respect to the constructive task-based approach. Carless (2004) suggests that "adaptation and a flexible situated version of task-based teaching" (p.595) be needed. This adaptation should take account of the socio-cultural context (Butler, 2005), exploring possible factors affecting three stages of an educational process: task planning, task design characteristics, and task implementation, all of which should be

weighed to decide the extent to which communicative tasks can be inserted into classroom activities (Carless, 2003). As noted by Carless (2012), teachers' pedagogical conceptions have a stronger effect than other factors in innovation take-up. Undoubtedly, teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching established by social and cultural influences should be put to the front in this consideration. It is the connecting point of influential forces.

A Conceptual Framework of Teacher Beliefs and TBLT Implementation

Drawing on the synthesis of research above, a conceptual framework could be developed to sketch influential forces that shape TBLT implementation. This tentative framework can be further developed as future empirical research accumulates. The framework is adapted from the conceptual model suggested by Borg (2006) based on his research review of language teacher cognition. His model describes dimensions of factors impacting teacher cognition such as teachers' personal history and schooling experience which shape their difficult-to-change preconceptions; professional training that may impact teacher existing cognitions. The contextual factors inside and outside the classroom mediate teacher cognition and classroom teaching, possibly causing a mismatch between what teachers believe and what they do. Classroom practice is defined as the interaction between cognition and contextual factors and unconsciously or consciously influences teacher cognition through conscious reflections. The context, in other words, functions as a mediator between teacher cognition and practice. Borg's (2006) model highlights the central role of teacher beliefs in their teaching as stated below:

> Teachers' beliefs play a major role in defining teaching tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to those tasks. But why should this be so? Why wouldn't research-based knowledge or academic theory serve this purpose just as well? The answer suggested here is that the contexts and environments within which

teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled, and that beliefs are peculiarly suited for making sense of such contexts. (Borg, 2006, p. 324)

In this regard, Borg's model, however, appears to position language teachers' beliefs as an independent component which is situated in and shaped by the context or shapes the context itself. The adjusted framework below draws on Borg's to highlight similar impactful forces on EFL teachers' conception about TBLT, but instead it positions teacher beliefs within a contextual circle where a vast variety of contextual factors could interact to affect them. Language teachers' beliefs then interact with their implementation of TBLT.

As described in Figure 1, teachers' conceptions about TBLT are nested in their existing beliefs regarding language pedagogy formulated over years of schooling, professional training, and especially their day-to-day lived experiences with classrooms and institutions which are all historically originated in a broader social, cultural and educational environment in which the teachers are situated. Contextual factors as reviewed above involve the language environment conducive to communicative learning, cultural values and educational conceptions, time pressure (restricted class time and workload), social accountability, and assessment. Their classroom practice overall and TBLT implementation specifically are thus mediated by their conceptions about TBLT which interact with their existing pedagogical beliefs, including form instruction.
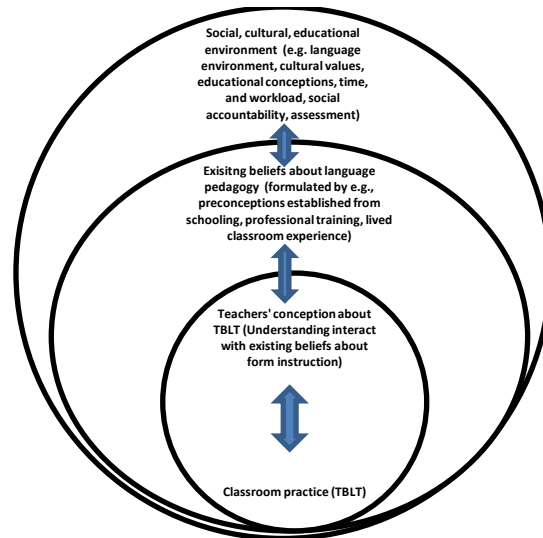
Figure 1. A framework of teacher beliefs and practice of task-based instruction

Implications and Conclusions

The framework above offers a tentative but more explicit view of the relationship between teacher beliefs, teacher practice and context. This framework could serve as the departure point for a confirmatory factor analysis study to explore the interaction of influential factors highlighted in the paper. Future research could examine to what extent teachers' beliefs about language pedagogy determine their implementation of TBLT, or interact with other factors in determining teachers' decision on TBLT practice.

Pedagogically, the model also provides an explicit view on how integrating an approach (e.g., TBLT) into EFL teachers' practice can be facilitated. Being a central element (Borg, 2006), teacher pedagogical beliefs can be a good starting point for work on integrating TBLT. Teachers' beliefs are personal and tacit (Pajares, 1992), which explains why the uptake level of TBLT varied according to different individuals as indicated in some studies (Cheng & Moses, 2011; Hu, 2013). For in-service teachers whose teaching experiences strongly shape their pedagogical beliefs (Johnson, 1994; Nunan 1992; Mok, 1994), it is not easy to impact their changes through short training workshops as previously observed (Canh, 2008), but there should be measures to introduce TBLT in a more context-sensitive manner.

Future teacher development courses may consider which existing beliefs can filter out TBLT, so that work could be more carefully designed to tackle them. Nguyen (2014) argues that for Vietnamese EFL school teachers to change towards alignment with TBLT, their deep beliefs regarding form instruction should be reflected on and changed. Perhaps, TBLT should not be treated as a 'super star', but introduced to the teachers in terms of when and how it can be applicable in the classroom. EFL teachers have the need to be well-prepared for, instead of being reactive to arising situations, so teacher developers could support them to anticipate language focus or linguistic problems which may arise during the task activity so that they can be prepared for dealing with these problems at the end stage of a task-based lesson.

Importantly, teachers are encouraged to trial and consciously reflect on the approach (Borg, 2006; Nguyen, 2014). In particular, EFL teachers need to be supported in terms of focusing on meaning in their classroom actions. Training the teachers to manage interaction with students in the classroom in a way that focuses on communication exchanges is essential to help them move closer to TBLT.

Professional training or teacher education programs are also where pre-service teachers' beliefs may be impacted (Borg, 2006). Accordingly, specific TBLT models and principles should be given due attention alongside other approaches or procedures. From my personal experience and observation, the PPP procedure remains a dominant model in English teacher education programs and schools in Vietnam because it has been established as a highly successful model since its induction through the ELTTP project in 1998 (Watson, 2003). In fact, the PPP is highly structured and organized (Watson, 2003), thus being congruent with Vietnamese teachers' beliefs and practice about English teaching. Therefore, it is not sufficient to introduce TBLT principles or theory in methodological courses. Without a specific, practical model like the PPP, TBLT will remain a theoretical proposal.

Furthermore, Long (2015) argues that teachers need to be

involved early with practical demonstrations of TBLT so that the approach could be spread. Alongside a clear demonstration is the need to tackle pedagogical preconceptions which are resistant to change (Kennedy, 1991) and may filter new input received from education courses (Richardson, 1996). Conscious reflections on these preconceptions, which are normally inadequate and defected, are key to enabling trainee teachers to be aware of them, thereby accepting changes.

In conclusion, much still needs to be researched about developing task models that could be applicable to Asian contexts, which share common educational, social and cultural features. Teacher education programs are the initial stage for impacting teachers' pedagogical preconceptions. For teacher development, TBLT should be viewed as an alternative approach in teachers' professional repertoire, rather than a replacement of traditional practices which are reinforced over years in Asian countries. A conceptual framework of the interaction between teacher beliefs and practice with the contextual factors regarding TBLT implementation as suggested in this paper, albeit being tentative, hopefully provides a basis for future confirmatory research or initiating change in EFL teacher beliefs about TBLT and foreign language teaching. Future work on addressing the gap between research and classroom practice needs to put teacher beliefs to the front.

The author

Nguyen Van Loi has been engaged with English teacher education for over twenty years at Can Tho University, Vietnam. His research interest falls in language teacher cognition and second language pedagogy. His doctoral research focuses on EFL teachers' cognition of key enabling conditions for second language acquisition.

References

Adams, R., & Newton, J. (2009). TBLT in Asia: Constraints and opportunities. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 19*, 1-17.

Anderson, J. (1993). Is a communicative approach practical for teaching English in China? Pros and cons. *System, 21*(4), 471-480.

Bao, R. & Du, X. (2015). Implementation of task-based language teaching in Chinese as a foreign language. Benefits and challenges. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 28*(3), 291-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2015.1058392

Barnard, R., & Nguyen, G.V. (2010). Task-based language teaching (TBLT): A Vietnamese case study using narrative frames to elicit teachers' beliefs. *Language Education in Asia, 1*(1), 77-86

Bax, S. (2003). Bringing context and methodology together. *ELT Journal, 57*(3), 295-296.

Bock, G. (2000). Difficulties in implementing communicative theory in Vietnam. *Teacher's Edition, 2*, 24-28.

Borg, S. (2006). Teacher cognition and language education. London, UK: Continuum.

Butler, Y.G. (2005). Comparative perspectives toward communicative activities among elementary school teachers in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. *Language Teaching Research, 9*, 423-446.

Butler, Y.G. (2011). The Implementation of Communicative and Task-Based Language Teaching in the Asia-Pacific Region. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 31*, 36–57. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000122

Bygate, M., Skehan, P., & Swain, M. (Eds.). (2001). Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language teaching, learning and testing. New York, NY: Longman.

Canh, L.V. (2008). Teachers' beliefs about curricular innovation in Vietnam: A preliminary study. In Y. H. Choi, & B. Spolsky (Eds.), *ELT curriculum innovation and implementation* (pp. 191-216). Seoul, Korea: Asia TEFL.

Carless, D. (2002). Implementing task-based learning with young learners. *ELT Journal, 56*(4), 389-396.

Carless, D.R. (2003). Factors in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. *System, 31*(4), 485-500.

Carless, D. (2004). Issues in teachers' reinterpretation of a task-based innovation in primary schools. *TESOL Quarterly, 38*(4), 639-661.

Carless, D. (2009). Revisiting the TBLT versus P-P-P debate: Voices from Hong Kong. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 19*, 49-66.

Carless, D. (2012). TBLT in EFL settings: looking back and moving forwards. In A. Shehadeh, & C. Coombe (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching in foreign language contexts: Research and implementation.* (pp. 354-359). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins

Cao, T.H.P. (2018). Task-based language teaching: Affordances and challenges in TBLT implementation at the Vietnamese tertiary level. *The Journal of Asian TEFL, 15* (2), 510-515. DOI: 10.18823/asiatefl.2018.15.2.1.510

Cheng, L., & Wang, H. (2004). Understanding professional challenges faced by Chinese teachers of English. *TESL - EJ, 7*, 1-17. Retrieved from http://tesl-ej.org/ej28/a2.html

Deng, C., & Carless, D. (2009). The communicativeness of activities in a task-based innovation in Guangdong, China. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 19,* 113-134.

Djapoura, A. (2004). The effect of pre-task planning time on task-based performance. In C. Edwards, & J. Willis (Eds.), *Teachers exploring tasks in English language teaching* (pp. 214-227). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eguchi, M., & Eguchi, K. (2006). The limited effect of PBL on EFL learners: A case study of English magazine projects. *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3). Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Sept_06_me&ke.php

Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal, 50* (3) 213-218.

Ellis, R. (2003). Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Foster, P. (1999). Key concepts in ELT: Task-based learning and pedagogy. *ELT Journal, 53*, 69-70.

Foster, P. (2009). Task-based language learning research: Expecting too much or too little? *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 19* (3), 247-263

Foster, P., & Skehan, P. (1999). The influence of source of planning and focus of planning on task-based performance. *Language Teaching Research, 3*(3), 215-247.

Freeman, D. (2002). The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach: A perspective from North American educational research on teacher education in English language teaching. *Language Teaching, 35*(1), 1-13.

Freeman, D., & Richards, J.C. (1993). Conceptions of teaching and the education of second language teachers. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(2), 193-216.

Gorsuch, G.J. (2000). EFL educational policies and educational cultures: Influences on teachers' approval of communicative activities. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(4), 675-710.

Hasanova, D., & Shadieva, T. (2008). Implementing communicative language teaching in Uzbekistan. *TESOL Quarterly 42* (1), 138-143.

Ho, W.K. (2004). English language teaching in East Asia today: An overview. In W. K. Ho, & R. Y. L. Wong (Eds.), *English language teaching in East Asia today: Changing policies and practices* (pp. 1-32).Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10*, 301-320.

Holliday, A. (1994). Appropriate methodology and social context. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hu, G. (2005a). Contextual influences on instructional practices: A Chinese case for an ecological approach to ELT. *TESOL Quarterly, 39* (4), 635-57.

Hu, G. (2005b). 'CLT is best for China'-an untenable absolutist claim. *ELT Journal, 59*(1), 65-68.

Hui, L. (1997). New bottles, old wine: Communicative language teaching in China. *Forum 35*(4). Retrieved from http://eca.state.gov/forum/vols/vol35/no4/p38.htm

Jarvis, H., & Atsilarat, S. (2004). Shifting paradigms: From a communicative to a context-based approach. *Asian EFL Journal, 6*, 1-15. Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/december_04_HJ&SA.php

Jeon, I., & Hahn, J.W. (2006). Exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching: A case study of Korean secondary school classroom practice. *Asian EFL Journal, 8* (1). Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/March_06_ijj.php

Johnson, K.E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of pre-service English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10*(4), 439-452.

Kaplan, M.A., & Leaver, B.L. (2004). Task-based instruction in U.S. government Slavic language programmes. In B. L. Leaver, & J. R. Willis (Eds.), *Task-based instruction in foreign language education: Practice and programmes* (pp. 47-66). Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press.

Kennedy, M.M. (1991). An agenda for research on teacher learning. NCRTL Special Report. *ERIC ED 331806*. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED331806

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). TESOL methods: Changing tracks, challenging trends. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*, 59-81.

Lantolf, J.P. (2000). Socio-cultural theory and second language learning. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Leaver, B.L., & Willis, J.R. (Eds.). (2004). *Task-based instruction in foreign language education: Practices and programmes.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Lee, S.M. (2005). The pros and cons of task-based instruction in elementary

English classes. *English Teaching, 60*, 185–205.

Li, D.F. (1998). It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the

Communicative Approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(4), 677-703.

Littlewood, W. (2004). Task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal, 58*, 319-326.

Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching, 40*, 243-249.

Liu, Y., Mishan, F., & Chambers, A. (2018). Investigating EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching in higher education in China. The Language Learning Journal, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2018.1465110

Long, M. 2015. Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Long, M.H., & Crookes, G. (1992). Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly, 26*(1), 27-56.

Nishino, T., & Watanabe, M. (2008). Communication-oriented policies versus classroom realities in Japan. *TESOL Quarterly 42* (1), 133-136.

Nguyen, G.V. (2014). Forms or meaning? Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding task-based language teaching: A Vietnamese case study. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 11*(1), 1-36.

Nguyen, V.G., Le, V.C., & Barnard, R. (2015). "Old wine in new bottles": Two case studies of task-based language teaching in Vietnam. In M. Thomas & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Contemporary task-based language teaching in Asia* (pp. 68–86). London, UK: Bloomsbury.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2005). Important tasks of English education: Asia-wide and beyond. *Asian EFL Journal, 7*(3). Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/ Sept_05_rn.php.

Nunan, D. (2006). Task-based language teaching in the Asia context: Defining 'task'. *Asian EFL Journal 8*(3). Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Sept_06_dn.php

Nunn, R. (2006). Designing holistic units for task-based learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, *8* (3). Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/September_06_ijj.php

Oxford, R. (2001). Integrated skills in the ESL/ EFL classroom. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics*. Retrieved from http://www.ericdigests.org/2002-2/esl.htm

Pajares, M.F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62* (3), 307-332.

Pham, H.H. (2000). The key socio-cultural influences on success in tertiary English programmes in Vietnam. In J. Shaw, D. Lubelska, & Michelle, N. (Eds), *Partnership and interaction: Proceedings on Language and Development,* Hanoi, Vietnam, October 13-15, 1999. Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.

Phuong, H.Y. (2016). Challenges of shifting to task-based language teaching: A story from a Vietnamese teacher. *Can Tho University Journal of Science*, 2, 37-45. DOI: 10.22144/ctu.jen.2016.002. Retrieved from https://sj.ctu.edu.vn/ql/docgia/tacgia-26682/baibao-26906/doi-ctu.jen.2016.002.html

Prabhu, N.S. (1987). Second language pedagogy. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Rahman, M.M., & Pandian, A. (2016). The gap between research and practice in the field of SLA: The rationale behind it and bridging the gap. Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 3 (3), 162-172.

Richards, J.C. (2002). Addressing the grammar gap in task work. In J.C. Richards, & W.A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 152-166). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In D.C. Berliner, & R.C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of*

educational psychology (pp. 102-119). New York, NY: Macmillan Library Reference.

Samuda, V., & Bygate, M. (2008). Tasks in second language learning. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Seedhouse, P. (1999). Task-based interaction. *ELT Journal, 53*(3), 149-156.

Shim, R. J., & Baik, M. J. (2004) English education in South Korea. In W.K. Ho, & R.Y.L. Wong (Eds.), *English language teaching in East Asia today: An overview* (pp. 241-261). Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.

Skehan, P. (1996). A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction. *Applied Linguistics, 17*(1), 38-62.

Skehan, P. (1998). A cognitive approach to language learning. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Skehan, P. (2003). Task-based instruction. *Language Teaching, 36,* 1-14.

Swan, M. (2005). Legislation by hypothesis: The case of task-based instruction. *Applied Linguistics, 26*(3), 376-401.

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2000). Task-based second language learning: the uses of the first language. *Language Teaching Research, 4*(3), 251-274.

Tinker Sachs, G. (2007). The challenges of adopting and adapting task-based cooperative teaching and learning in an EFL context. In K. Van den Branden, K. van Gorp, & M. Verhelst (Eds.), *Tasks in action: Task-based language education from a classroom-based perspective* (pp. 253–264). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Todd, W.R. (2006). Continuing change after the innovation. *System, 34*(1), 1-14.

Van den Branden, K. (2006). Introduction: Task-based language teaching in a nutshell. In K. Van den Branden, (Ed.), *Task-based language education: From theory to practice* (pp.1-126). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Universtiy Press.

Van den Branden, K., Bygate, M., & Norris, J. M. (2009). Task-based language teaching: Introducing the reader. In K. Van den Branden, M. Bygates, & J. M. Norris (Eds.), *Task-based*

language teaching: A reader (pp. 1-13). Amsterdam, Holland: John Benjamins.

Van Loi, N. (2011). Dynamic conceptions of input, output and interaction: Lecturers learning second language theory. An unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/10289/5167

Watson, N. (2003). English language teacher training project (ELTTP)-Vietnam: A final report of evaluation consultancy. Retrieved from https://docplayer.net/34054046-English-language-teacher-training-project-elttp-vietnam.html

Wills, D., & Willis, J. (2007). Doing task-based teaching. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Zhang, Y., & Lou, S. (2018). Teachers' beliefs and practice in Chinese as a second language classrooms. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics 41*(3), 264-287. DOI: 10.1515/cjal-2018-0022

Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: Progress and resistance. *TESOL Quarterly, 35*(1), 194-198.