TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

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Introduction

In the late 1980s, task-based language instruction (TBLT) became increasingly popular when the focus of second language acquisition shifted to communicative competence. TBLT, derived from constructivist theory of learning and developed in the communicative approach, is considered an extension of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. This teaching strategy is believed to have improved the quality of the teaching and learning process (Shabani & Ghasemi, 2014; Mustafa, 2010) while simultaneously hindering the flaws of CLT, primarily students' low English language skills in Indonesia. Because of its focus on message delivery rather than learners' grammatical skills, CLT is seen as the basis of the common

proficiency problem. If you compare it to CLT, TBLT is more concerned with developing meaning in real-life settings. This kind of teaching gives students the chance to apply their grammatical knowledge to a variety of tasks. It has been shown that TBLT has a significant impact on the proficiency of English language learners.

Students in task-based language learning are more concerned with communicating their meaning through interacting with the task (Cutrone & Beh, 2018). When utilizing language for legitimate purposes, students in TBLT must think about language form as a whole, rather than just one particular form. The goal of TBLT is to move from fluency to accuracy while integrating all four skills (Hishan, 2020). According to Ellis and Shintani (2014), the effectiveness of TBLT in boosting L2 learners' skill appears to be mostly due to its ability to promote natural learning in the classroom setting. In other words, this approach aimed at increasing learners' communicative competence by engaging in meaningful dialogue while completing tasks.

Despite the efficacy of TBLT as demonstrated in numerous studies, the challenges associated with conceiving and developing a task-based lesson remain considerable from the teacher's perspective. Some teachers believe that developing a task-based lesson is extremely difficult (Shintani, 2011). The complexity here is divided into four components: (1) comprehending the nature of a task (Willis & Willis, 2007), (2) designing a sequence that incorporates an effective scaffolding technique (Révész & Gurzynski-Weiss, 2016), (3) a distinct approach to teaching forms (Tan, 2016), and (4) conducting assessment (Douglas & Kim, 2014). When it comes to those elements of complexity, some teachers lack confidence and are hesitant to incorporate TBLT into their instruction.

In task-based classrooms, the role of the teacher is more complicated than in conventional classrooms (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Instead of dominating and controlling students, teachers should facilitate, monitor, and advise them in their language learning and use. Participants in task-based learning environments must assume greater responsibility rather than simply waiting for spoon-fed information (Nunan, 2004). As long as it's task-based learning theory (TBLT), learners are expected to actively participate in learning activities organized around tasks, preferably with peers. The standard transmission or lecture-based style is familiar to Asian students, but this role adoption is unfamiliar. It's possible that because they're paid to teach, the teacher has lost control and isn't taking responsibility for their actions.

As the main actor in the success of TBLT implementation, teachers must have a clear understanding of the theory behind it. For teachers to successfully implement TBLT, they must be familiar and have adequate knowledge of the instructional framework, covering its plan, procedures, and assessment. This follows Branden's advice (2006). According to him, the ability of teachers to generate and implement language learning tasks is critical to the success of task-based language teaching that is challenging enough for their students to engage with and learn from.

A teacher's perception is critical, as it significantly impacts the teacher's decision to use a particular teaching approach or method. Perception is even more vital for teachers, who are the subject of this study. Everything is new to the teacher, and their perceptions during their training may inform every aspect of their subsequent teaching practice. A distinct view of language and a coherent theory of learning have led to changes in teaching methods (Juhji, 2016). All teachers may believe the same thing, but they may put their beliefs into practice in different ways, leading to various classroom activities.

There have only been a few studies looking at how teachers perceive TBLT's suitability in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. A task-based approach was found to motivate students and be appropriate for group work by Jeon and Hahn (2006), who interviewed Korean secondary school teachers. Researchers McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) talked to EFL

teachers at a Thai university who said their students had grown more self-reliant in their studies. According to their instructors, the student's academic skills improved, and they could apply them in future classes (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Despite their positive feelings about TBLT, these educators had reservations about some of the task-based approach's features. For example, Korean secondary school teachers believed that task performance assessment was a problem (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). According to the teachers interviewed for the study, giving all students the same grade was unfair. Different aspects of group work needed to be considered when determining a grade (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Some teachers expressed concern over how much and what kind of grammar instruction students would receive in the task-based course.

In the Indonesian context, TBLT has not yet been adequately researched to be effective. The TBLT has not yet been studied or proven empirically in Indonesia (Hutagalung and Purwati, 2014). The TBLT was applied in an EFL context but not in teachers' perceptions of EFL teachers' practice. Meanwhile, how teachers view the language-teaching process significantly impacts what they do in practice. Accordingly, this study aims to learn how Tanjungpinang EFL teachers think about task-based instruction by looking at their understanding of TBLT ideas, opinions on how it should be implemented, and some reasons to use or avoid the approach in the classroom.

This study examines how EFL teachers perceive task-based language teaching in an Indonesian Islamic junior high school. The topic was chosen due to its relevance to implementing Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum (Kemendiknas, 2013). Teachers' perceptions of TBLT help them reflect on their teaching methods and increase their awareness of the significance of reflections in ESL teaching (EFL). The first step toward assessing and reflecting on the application of TBLT to EFL instruction appears to be understanding teachers' perceptions of TBLT (Hui, 2004).

The gaps left by previous studies include issues about teachers' understanding of TBLT, teachers' perceptions of TBLT, and teachers' challenges in implementing TBLT. Using this gap as a starting point, this research seeks to address the following three research questions: (1) examine EFL teachers' understanding of task and TBLT; (2) explore teachers' perceptions of TBLT implementation; and (3) investigate EFL teachers' challenges or difficulties with TBLT implementation.

Methodology

This research was concerned with how teachers view language instruction that is based on tasks. When looking into Indonesian EFL teachers' views on TBLT, this study focused on their understanding of TBLT concepts and their views on TBLT's implementation in the classrooms. It was a case study in qualitative research. Four Indonesian Islamic junior high school teachers took part in this study. Teachers who had previously used the approach in their own classrooms were chosen by the researcher as research participants. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews to gather data for the study. He completed four in-depth interviews with teachers using the interview guide he had created. It was developed in response to three research questions, including teachers' understanding of TBLT, teachers' perspective of TBLT, and the challenges of implementing TBLT. The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis. The first step was reading the transcriptions to families the data. After that, the information was sifted through to find the most important details. The data was then organized into themes and discussed using previous research.

Finding and Discussion

This section presents the study's findings regarding teachers' understandings and perceptions of TBLT. In addition, this section discusses the challenges or difficulties associated with implementing TBLT in EFL classrooms.

Teachers' Understanding of TBLT

During the interview, the interviewees were asked to describe the fundamental principles of TBLT. Here are some interview responses:
Regarding their understanding of task-based language teaching, the teachers had a good understanding. They gave a clear definition of TBLT and emphasized some essential points.

I think TBLT is an approach that focuses on students' activities that encourages group members to work together to do language input and output in the real world. (Interviewee A)
In my opinion, TBLT is a learner-centered teaching approach in which students collaborate in pairs or groups to reach a common objective. (Interviewee C)
Students are given authentic materials and themes to work with and then asked to meet particular objectives. Furthermore, students must deal with a few tasks that they may come across in the real world. (Interviewee D)

The teachers brought forward many important TBLT principles (e.g., learner-centered, authentic material, pair or group work, goal-oriented). Furthermore, each of the four interviewees had heard about TBLT before they came in for an interview. The following are their detailed descriptions:

TBLT asks students to perform a task that is given to them. The task should be relevant to the student's daily life in some way. (Interviewee A)
In my opinion, TBLT refers to a class task that students must complete. (Interviewee B)
TBLT teaches intending to make real-world connections. Because it should be goal-oriented instruction that includes language usage and communication (Interviewee C)
TBLT is a task-oriented method of instructing students. It might be a case of students working together to complete tasks. (Interviewee D)

Furthermore, while discussing the concept of a task, it can be shown that they were able to identify task features. According to the interviewers, a task is an activity that focuses on meaning and communication. Additionally, the respondents stated that the work should be realistic and relevant to real-world events. Here are some of the examples:

I think tasks are any activities that students are required to perform during class. Tasks should be real and meaningful. (Interviewee A)
For me, tasks are any assignments that help students understand how the language works and how to communicate successfully in the target language. (Interviewee B)
In this approach, students are given tasks to accomplish in a classroom. Many tasks require students to communicate in their target language with classmates or teachers. (Interviewee D)

This finding is in line with earlier research showing that teachers have a positive understanding of the fundamental principles of TBLT (Jeon and Hahn, 2006; Ansari and Shahrokhi, 2014). Jeon and Hahn (2006) investigated EFL teachers' opinions toward TBLT in a Korean secondary school and discovered that teachers had a good attitude toward TBLT principles. This could be because the current Korean national English curriculum has shifted toward TBLT, which attempts to increase learners' conversational skills. The findings also

support the conclusions of Ansari and Shahrokhi's (2014) study, which looked at the attitudes of 40 Iranian English teachers from high schools and language institutes. Teachers were found to have a thorough comprehension of TBLT principles. This could be because the current Iranian national English curriculum has a clear trend toward TBLT, which attempts to increase students' communicative skills. This finding backs with the findings of a study conducted in our setting by Tagesse (2008), who investigated the practicability of task-based instruction in higher education.

Teachers' Perceptions of TBLT

According to the interview data, the teachers recognized numerous benefits of using task-based language teaching in an English classroom. Concerning the benefits for teachers, the respondents agreed that task-based language education allows teachers to be facilitators who make ideas for students. Following are some examples:

TBLT allows teachers to be more than just teachers. Teachers can instruct, monitor, and provide suggestions to students. (Interviewee B)
TBLT gives teachers a sense of being the facilitators who control the classroom, supervise pupils and assist them in completing tasks. (Interviewee D)

Furthermore, most interviewees believed that task-based language teaching helps language learners improve their communicative abilities since it puts them in real-world settings to utilize the target language. Here are a few examples:

In TBLT, since students may communicate in a real-world context through tasks, they have the opportunity to improve their communication skills. (Interviewee A)
In my mind, TBLT is particularly beneficial for students because it is authentic context. Students can use what they have learned in the classroom in their daily lives. (Interviewee B)

Moreover, interviewers noted that group or pair work provides more opportunities for learners to communicate with friends. Below are some examples:

Students have the opportunity to work in groups. They can discuss their thoughts with their peers. (Interviewee C)
TBLT enhances learners' interaction skills as well as their academic development. It encourages students to do tasks with their friends. (Interviewee D)

The interviewees also noted that task-based language instruction encourages learners to take their time when learning a foreign language. Some instances are as follows:

In TBLT, learners have a better time in the classroom because of the atmosphere. Because of this, they will have a greater sense of involvement. (Interviewee B)

In my opinion, when students are communicating in English in a classroom, they feel more relaxed because the environment is authentic. (Interviewee C)

The findings demonstrated that teachers have good perceptions toward a task-based approach because they can see the benefits of task-based language teaching for both teachers and learners. TBLT allows teachers to expand their professional development options. TBLT gives chances for teachers to be effective facilitators. The triangulated results of the current study from the in-depth interview further support the premise that TBLT allows teachers to be

more than just instructors. They instruct, supervise, and make suggestions to the students. This is consistent with the findings of Tabatabaei and Hadi (2011), who discovered that TBLT offers teachers a great deal of psychological responsibility as facilitators. As a result, in this learner-centered approach, teachers appeared to be more adaptable and dynamic in the classroom than in teacher-centered approaches. This commonality indicates that teachers in both the prior study and the current research could appreciate the benefits of a task-based language teaching approach. Teachers are confident that task-based language teaching will help students learn English more effectively.

The findings also revealed that TBLT is a practical approach to help develop learners' communicative skills since it can drive learners to communicate with friends and teachers. Furthermore, TBLT can provide a peaceful environment for students to practice their language skills. Similarly, Hui (2004) discovered that, in teachers' opinions, TBLT can improve learners' communication skills since they must communicate in the target language as often as possible in order to work with their group and accomplish assignments. As a result, it enables individuals to communicate in English in their daily lives effectively. This is also consistent with the findings of Hadi (2012), who discovered that task-based language education is excellent for learners since it motivates learners to communicate with peers and gives them more opportunities to work in groups. The fact that task-based language instruction emphasizes learning through communication in the target language and learners can integrate language information obtained in the classroom with language use outside the classroom could be a significant component that contributes to this similar advantage for learners (Nunan, 2004).

The Challenges in Implementing TBLT

To collect data for the study, four participants were interviewed individually to ascertain the challenges encountered during the implementation of task-based language education. The findings are separated into three categories: teachers' aspects, students' aspects, and school's aspects.

Teacher's aspect

Teachers' knowledge about TBLT

All of the teachers interviewed said that teachers' understanding of TBLT is critical. They stated that before applying to the TBLT, teachers should thoroughly understand the approach. In other words, if they understand the TBLT principles, they will be able to execute TBLT in their English lesson. Understanding TBLT in detail enables teachers to plan, carry out, and adapt tasks to their students' English proficiency levels.

To my mind, knowledge of TBLT is critical. This assists teachers in organizing their language acquisition and language pedagogy lessons. (Interviewee A)
If teachers are unfamiliar with TBLT, they will be unable to create or carry out tasks effectively in the classroom. (Interviewee C)
Having a strong understanding of TBLT enables teachers to provide varied and relevant tasks in class that support the lesson's objectives and stimulate students' work. (Interviewee D)

Teachers' English proficiency

The majority of interviewees believed that teachers' proficiency was the most critical component in assisting teachers in implementing TBLT in their English lessons.

To me, language competency is the most critical feature of a competent teacher. It may assist the teacher in fulfilling the TBLT's pedagogical requirements. (Interviewee A)

I believe that a teacher's proficiency in the English language enables them to meet the needs of students of varying levels. To attain his or her objectives, the teachers can use several structures and explanations. (Interviewee C)
I'm baffled as to why some of my students don't understand what I say,, so I have to clarify in my mother tongue. (Interviewee D)

Teachers' training
Among the four teachers interviewed, only one had received TBLT at the university level. The others were not taught in university by TBLT. As a result, they encountered difficulties doing TBLT.

Although I did not receive TBLT at university, I have participated in various training or workshops since 2010. (Interviewee A)
Because I was taught by TBLT at my university and practiced teaching through TBLT after graduating, I find it enjoyable to teach my students through TBLT, and the students are also motivated. (Interviewee C)

Limited preparation time
Some interviewees mentioned that having little preparation time was a hurdle because they had multiple tasks to accomplish every day, such as administrative work, extra-curricular activities, and supplying lessons, which took away time from preparing task-based materials.

At my school, I had a lot of administrative tasks. In addition, I was given the responsibility of overseeing after-school events. (Interviewee B)
I lack the time necessary to arrange pre-task, task activities, and post-task. The load of the work is really demanding. (Interviewee C)

The findings revealed that teachers' understanding of TBLT is critical. Teachers who are unfamiliar with TBLT will be unable to plan or carry out tasks in the classroom in a comprehensive or effective manner. Furthermore, teachers' English ability might assist teachers in meeting the TBLT pedagogical standards. Teachers that are fluent in English will offer a positive example for students to emulate. Teachers with limited English proficiency, on the other hand, will struggle to carry out instructions, particularly in TBLT. Teachers' training is another aspect that teachers believe influences their implementation. A teacher who received TBLT training at university has fewer problems in their classroom than those who did not. In-service training courses, according to the interviewees, help teachers improve their knowledge of TBLT and pedagogy. Furthermore, the interviewees believed that one of the most difficult aspects of implementing TBLT was a lack of preparation time. This was not a major challenge among teachers (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Liu & Xiong, 2016; Tan, 2016). According to the interview data, teachers indicated that the time given for preparing TBLT was limited due to the high burden associated with numerous types of duties, such as administrative work, extra-curricular activities, and assignment grading. Additionally, teachers' training is viewed as a component that influences their implementation. A teacher who received TBLT training at university has fewer problems in their classroom than those who did not.

Student's aspect
Students' low proficiency in English
Some interviewees acknowledged that students' limited English ability posed a problem to the TBLT application.

My students' competency was really limited. They were unable to communicate in the tasks' required language. They were completely confused about carrying out the assigned tasks. (Interviewee B)
I believe that TBLT was created specifically for students with exceptional abilities, as students are required to communicate and produce in English. (Interviewee D)

Large gap of students' learning abilities

Some interviewees said that a significant disparity in learning abilities was a challenge because it had a significant impact on the success of TBLT implementation. To the detriment of students with varying learning capacity, students with higher abilities tend to dominate group activity, diminishing the educational benefits of TBLT in an unbalanced way.

I believe that TBLT was unsuccessful in my class because several of my pupils mastered the material quickly and completed all of the tasks assigned by the teacher. (Interviewee A)
TBLT would not be beneficial to my class's low-ability students. (Interviewee B)

Classroom disciplinary problem

Some interviewers explained that one of the problematic elements in implementing TBLT was the classroom disciplinary problem. They said that using TBLT in the classroom created an abnormal amount of noise, which interfered with the quality of teaching and learning.

When they were assigned group tasks, they were quite boisterous. It was intolerable. Then I came to a halt, pleading with them to be a little quieter. (Interviewee C)
In implementing TBLT, I was scared that other instructors or the headmaster would assume that I was incapable of maintaining order in the classroom if they happened to pass by. (Interviewee D)

Students' motivation

The interviewees claimed that students who are more motivated study better than those who are less motivated.

Many students of my class are unable to participate in class discussions. It appears as though they are unwilling to learn. (Interviewee A)
Some students in my class lack motivation; they paid little attention to the teacher's demonstrations and never completed assigned work. (Interviewee D)

In terms of students' perspectives, interviewers noted that students' English competence and motivation play a significant role in their performance in completing tasks. Additionally, students who are good at English do better on tasks. Meanwhile, less capable students experience anxiety when participating in discussions or presentations. Moreover, all interviewees agreed that some students were not motivated in the task-based lesson. Therefore, they felt unwilling to do the tasks. As a result, more motivated students will learn more effectively than those who are less motivated. If kids are motivated, they will attempt to participate in tasks.

Additionally, the result regarding classroom disciplinary problems is instructive in that teachers view noisy classrooms as disciplinary problems, resulting in a sterile learning environment. In addition, qualitative data from interviews revealed that teachers in Indonesia considered the noise generated during group assignments inappropriate since it disrupted the learning environment. The other difficulty in implementing TBLT from a student's perspective is the significant gap in students' learning ability. Mixed proficiency classes are prevalent in

Indonesian contexts due to the possibility of students being streamed based on their age rather than their ability. Tinker-Sachs (2007) suggests increasing cooperative learning, in which students with varying competency levels can assist one another.

Schools' aspect
Limited lesson time for TBLT
Some interviewees claimed that implementing TBLT on a large scale was difficult due to restricted instructional time. Because TBLT is divided into three parts, they believed it would be impossible for them to complete a task in a single 40-minute lesson.

The class duration was very short for me because it was only 40 minutes. So, my students were not unable to complete the tasks. (Interviewee C)
I was allotted only 40 minutes for a class, which was absurdly short. TBLT was performed more than what was necessary and must be repeated over time. (Interviewee D)

Large class size
Most teachers stated that their classrooms have roughly 30-34 students and that this number of students is insufficient for TBLT.

My class is too big for me. Class size is anywhere from 30 to 34 students. My students can't have presentations at the end of a task. (Interviewee A)
There were too many students in each group for me to verify that they all participated in the conversation. (Interviewee B)

Concerning the challenges that arise from the school's perspective, respondents stated that a large class was one of the difficulties in implementing TBLT (Mustafa, 2010; Nahabandi & Mukundan, 2012; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011). The course time allotment is insufficient for teachers to give an effective session replete with learning tasks. They felt that projects should be time-consuming and that pupils should have adequate time to work in groups to express their ideas or resolve problems. Furthermore, respondents suggested that class size can influence teachers' application of TBLT. If the class size is small, teachers will find it easier to adopt TBLT since it is easier for teachers to plan group work. According to Littlewood (2007), applying TBLT in big classes is especially challenging due to logistical challenges connected with students communicating in groups. However, it should be highlighted that many of the challenges associated with extensive courses are only meaningful when using interactive pair- or small-group tasks.

Conclusion
The research offered some findings regarding Indonesian EFL teachers' understandings of task-based language teaching and their perceptions.It may be inferred that EFL teachers possessed a good understanding of the concepts underlying task-based language teaching. Based on the interviews, teachers defined key terms for task definition and mentioned essential features of task-based language teaching theory.

Furthermore, the study's findings indicated that most teachers viewed task-based language teaching positively in terms of its benefits. They unanimously agreed that task-based language teaching is an excellent and successful instruction approach since it enables teachers to be great facilitators and allows for easy assessment of learners' performance. Additionally, participants believed that this type of instruction allows students to converse and communicate with their classmates and teachers. Additionally, TBLT can assist learners improve their level of language proficiency by focusing on four key language skills.

However, the participants agreed that it is difficult to implement task-based language teaching in the classroom due to challenges or problems with using TBLT in three aspects, including teacher aspects (teachers' knowledge about TBLT, teachers' English proficiency, teachers' training, limited preparation time), student aspects (students' low proficiency in English, large gap in students' learning abilities, classroom disciplinary problem, students' motivation) (limited lesson time for TBLT, large class size).

Some recommendations are made for Indonesian EFL teachers and the educational system in light of the findings. First, teachers should have opportunities to participate in educational programs, training, or workshops related to that teaching method, such as developing teaching materials, to gain additional knowledge and experience with TBLT, from basic principles to specific techniques. Second, it may be worthwhile for schools and governments to consider adjusting certain aspects of the educational system, such as lesson plans, or how to address issues related to limited teaching hours and teacher workload to provide teachers with more opportunities to implement task-based learning language teaching. As the study indicates that Indonesian EFL instructors' perspectives of TBLT were favorable in terms of its benefits, further research into the perceptions of other EFL teachers, including primary and secondary school teachers, as well as teachers in public and private schools, would be beneficial.

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