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Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Task-based Approach to Vocabulary Instruction in Secondary School English as a Foreign Language Classrooms

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VIETNAMESE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING TASK-BASED

APPROACH TO VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
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This thesis, written by Nguyen Thi Thuy Dung, and entitled Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Task-based Approach to Vocabulary Instruction in Secondary School English as a Foreign Language Classrooms, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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The thesis of Nguyen Thi Thuy Dung is approved.

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Dean Michael R. Heithaus
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Florida International University, 2018

DEDICATION

To my beloved father who always loves me with his whole heart, triggers my passion

with his deepest love, and trusts me with his whole strength.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Professor Eric Dwyer, Major Professor

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is considered innovative in foreign language teaching. However, the body of research on TBLT employment in vocabulary instruction is still modest. This study explored teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary instruction using TBLT. This study examined such application among Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers ($N = 60$) using a mixed methods research design. Data were collected using online questionnaires.

Data analysis showed that 53.6% of the participating teachers associated vocabulary instruction with TBLT. However, regardless of their years as instructors, they still found it challenging to implement TBLT vocabulary instruction due to numerous factors. In fact, 66.2% of the participating teachers acknowledged a variety of constraints in applying TBLT, among which, exam-oriented curricula were reported as the biggest impediment.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FL	Foreign Language
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
SCT	Sociocultural theory
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
ZDP	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER I   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one

has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to

say…While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary

nothing can be conveyed. (Wilkins, 1972, p. 97)

Vocabulary is a core component of any language system and a pedestal for

learners to go beyond their current language capacity. It functions as a central part in

communicating meaning, which can be achieved in case of limited grammatical

knowledge. The critical role of lexical knowledge has been stressed by Schmitt (2000),

who suggests that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the

acquisition of second language" (p. 55). In teaching English as a second language (ESL)

and English as a foreign language (EFL), vocabulary teaching is considered a

fundamental step for learners to start their language learning journey, developing four

macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation, 2011). All linguistic

activities and practices could not take place in the absence of vocabulary knowledge:

"The relationship between word knowledge and comprehension is unequivocal"

(Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003).

A considerable number of studies on vocabulary teaching and learning have

recognized the importance of lexical components to learners' language development.

(e.g., Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Nation, 1990; Arnaud & Bejoint, 1992; Huckin, Haynes

& Coady, 1995; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Schmitt, 1997 & 2000; Read, 1997; August,

Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). However, so far the research avenues related to classroom-based vocabulary teaching instructions are quite limited. In fact, vocabulary acquisition is the "greatest single source of problems" for EFL learners (Meara, 1980); for EFL teachers, helping learners store and retrieve vocabulary proves a substantially challenging task (Sökmen, 1997). For the acknowledgments about the difficulties both learners and teachers encounter when dealing with vocabulary in the classroom, additional studies on pragmatic approaches and strategy orientations are genuinely needed.

Apparently, for the openness of vocabulary and its almost rule-free manner, vocabulary teaching is not an easy task for any EFL teacher. Different from syntax and phonology, English vocabulary is not bound by rules and structures, which means that some believe that there is no other way to absorb it except learning word by word (Alqahtani, 2015). In fact, some morphological structures and rules may help to form words from a stem and suffixes. However, the formation still requires learners to know the stems. Consequently, teachers struggle with selecting the best way to teach vocabulary, and learners find it intimidating to retain and put new vocabulary into practice. In fact, the needs and purposes of EFL learners have dramatically shifted. English as a foreign language learners no longer have to be passive in the classroom, under the invisible control of textbooks and dominant teachers. Learners tend to expect the classroom to be more practical. The class should be a communication-driven environment, which allows learners to employ what they acquire in the classroom to address daily communication tasks. Such a state in EFL context makes room for the existence and flourishment of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) methodology. The

appearance of TBLT is viewed as a great stride in the history of EFL teaching and learning methodology. The method focuses on promoting learners' communicative competence, boosting their ability to use language for real communication and addressing daily tasks.

In the 1980s, TBLT arose as an innovation in EFL teaching and learning field (Nunan, 2004); however, it was yet to be popularly put into practice as it is now. Currently, TBLT emerges as such a dominant pedagogical approach in the field of language teaching that it has been treated as a centerpiece in many educational institutions around the world (Nunan, 2004). In a study about the impact of English as an international language on policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region, participants from seven countries in the research region suggest that TBLT is the cornerstone in the orientation toward language teaching curriculum design (Nunan, 2003). Task-Based Language Teaching increasingly gains momentum, not because it is the latest-born approach, but because of its high practicality. Task-Based Language Teaching genuinely marks a watershed in the history of foreign language teaching, with the aggregation between the outstanding attributes of former theoretical language teaching hypotheses, and the updated qualities to meet the immediate needs.

To date, the number of publications contributing to the literature of TBLT has been proliferating, dealing with a wide range of task-related aspects. However, the body of research on how TBLT is used to teach vocabulary in EFL classrooms from teachers' perspectives is still modest. Like many other innovative language teaching methods, TBLT has been introduced to Vietnam. A considerable body of research regarding TBLT application in Vietnamese EFL teaching and learning context has been done. However,

whether or not TBLT is being employed in vocabulary instruction still needs further investigation. Also, complexities that may hinder TBLT application in Vietnamese EFL classrooms should be explored.

The breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge play a critical role in affecting learners' success to read, listen, write, and speak. Thus, gaining an in-depth understanding of how vocabulary instruction takes place in the classroom will contribute to providing a more comprehensive explanation for the outcome of EFL language learning and teaching in Vietnam. Teachers have various choices when it comes to introducing lexical items to learners. Undoubtedly, no single method fits all students. The choice of which method to teach vocabulary depends on a variety of factors ranging from learners' age, language proficiency, motivation, learning style to teaching conditions. A proper EFL teaching and learning method is necessary for the effectiveness of vocabulary acquisition. Learners should be given opportunities to expose themselves to words, developing and retaining their meaning not only in class but outside the class environment (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

However, the permeation of traditional teaching methods can seem like a stumbling block hindering the practice of the most updated methods. The frequently used traditional vocabulary teaching techniques in the classroom consist of "giving [a] list of English words with their equivalents in native language, letting students recite new words, writing sentences with target vocabularies, explaining the meaning of vocabulary in native language, repeating vocabulary, and making students do plenty of vocabulary exercises" (Alizadeh, 2016), while learners mainly resort to rote memorization and reciting words, regardless of context, as a way to memorize the target language.

Classroom-based EFL teachers are expected to use the most innovative teaching methods to enhance learners' communicative competence. Nevertheless, EFL teachers struggle to incorporate these methods into their teaching practice as a result of internal (e.g., teachers' language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge) and external factors (e.g., textbooks and classroom conditions).

The current study aims to understand how EFL vocabulary instruction takes place in Vietnamese high-school contexts by examining to what extent TBLT is exploited for the integral part of language teaching, and what issues EFL teachers face in task-based vocabulary instruction. The research contributes to the literature of vocabulary instruction in the field of teaching English as a foreign/second language, particularly in such foreign language teaching environments as Vietnam, where learners often confront themselves with various impeding factors in their journey of foreign language cultivation. Students often struggle with the vastness of target language lexical knowledge. An appropriate vocabulary instruction method will be tremendously meaningful to EFL learners' language proficiency development. Nation and Waring (1997, p. 7) put forward that "vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, language use and so on". Vocabulary knowledge lays a foundation for EFL learners to connect sophisticated linguistic aspects and develop language proficiency. Lexis facilitates learners' understanding of spoken and written texts, which is fundamental to students' further language competence development. Task-Based Language Teaching may amplify EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition, a potential

solution to meet the needs of both learners and teachers in Vietnamese high-school EFL teaching and learning contexts.

1.2   Context of the study

Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, in 2006, initiated a water-shed EFL innovation program at the upper secondary school level, leading to a great deal of changes in the act of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam, fostering three major dimensions including curricular content, pedagogic approach, and learner assessment (Van et al. 2006a, 2006b). The introduction of the set of standard textbooks into the high-school level is one of the most conspicuous indicators in response to the call for innovation in EFL teaching in Vietnam. Textbooks were designed using familiar and interesting topics learners were expected to encounter in their daily life, helpful for their communication in an international environment (Van, 2016). The term *task*, which is used as a thread throughout textbooks, is a manifestation of TBLT discourse. The current teaching condition refers to the fact that teachers need to adopt TBLT to be able to deliver their lessons smoothly.

In terms of teaching pedagogy, the traditional structure-based and teacher-centered approach is replaced by TBLT, in which learners are supposed to be guided by teachers to develop their communicative competence through language use to address tasks in the classroom. Van (2016) presents that no longer are classroom teachers expected to be the domineering transmitters and controllers of classroom activities. Instead, they should flexibly play different roles such as initiator, organizer, and facilitator in communicative activities. The flexibility of roles involves teachers' pro-activeness to understand learners' actual capacity, needs, and interests. Accordingly,

textbooks should not be in the position of invisible oppressor. Textbooks instead serve as a source of content framework for teachers to build their lessons upon. Given the prescribed assessment in the new language teaching policy, EFL learners' language competence is tested with regard to four skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Van, 2016). Additionally, it is stressed that assessment should consist of not only formative but also summative form, reflected through teachers' critical role in assessing learners' language ability, helping learners recognize their progress and supporting them to overcome existing language difficulties (Van, 2016).

Such a launch in EFL teaching and learning lent itself to the emerging significance of English as a foreign language. English is a mandatory subject in almost all high schools in Vietnam. It is treated as a medium of communication and a bridge to connect Vietnam with the world in various professional fields. The role of English is currently highlighted, for English competence is one of the critical indicators of labor force capitals, particularly in the foreign-related areas. The purpose of learning English as a foreign language is multifarious: it serves as a means of communication for learners to acquire advanced scientific knowledge and techniques, explore the rich and diverse cultures of the world, and enter the international community (Van, 2016). Van (2016) also showed us that the high school English language curriculum was designed from the perspective of communicative language teaching (CLT), which means that the ultimate goal of EFL learning and teaching is facilitating learners' ability to communicate successfully in English. Among factors listed as prerequisites for developing EFL learners' communication skills, vocabulary was selected as a pivotal factor upon which communication competence can be built (Van. 2016). The assumption holds true in such

an EFL learning and teaching setting as Vietnam, where EFL learners' accumulated lexical knowledge serves as an amount of original capital for them to make more progress on their language learning journey.

The opportunities for EFL learners to put their English language knowledge into practice are limited for internal and external factors. The internal blockages come from learners and teachers themselves, accumulated from the conventional EFL teaching beliefs and practices. Though the new EFL teaching and learning approach has been claimed through the innovation program, English, to some extent, is still regarded as a single subject with principles and formulas to be memorized. However, the nature of language could not be reflected through such a passive approach. It is instead a 'live' masterpiece built up by humans' active authentic use. The innovation of TBLT is expected to promote EFL learners' language use competence by engaging learners in authentic communication in the classroom. However, TBLT methodology, which has been considered one of the major language teaching discourses in many institutes across Asia (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010), is still a vague concept for teachers to put into practice in the classrooms.

An additional noticeable logjam to the improvement of EFL language teaching and learning in Vietnamese context is related to mandated textbooks. Surveys by Minh (2007) and Canh (2007) report that teachers believe some of the topic-based units are hard to teach because those topics are not really relevant to the local contexts. In other words, what EFL learners would like to learn and what EFL teachers would like to teach should be closely attached to their daily life and their actual future language use. The priority should be placed on the most common need, using English for basic

communication. Given the external obstacle to teachers' practice of teaching and learning

English, in such environments of learning and teaching English as a foreign language as

Vietnam, learners often find it hard to immerse themselves in an ambiance rich in the

English language (Sawir, 2005). The gap between the inside-classroom and outside-

classroom may lower learners' communication competence development in the target

language.

Taken as a whole, an overview into EFL teaching and learning in Vietnamese

high schools indicates a struggle to arrive to the goal of equipping learners with English

communication competence. Though teachers have some power to implement the

designated teaching materials and teaching approaches, the result of EFL teaching and

learning has not been as expected. The implementation of the current research hopes to

add to the store of TBLT teaching techniques, particularizing in lexical component.

Based on the research findings, classroom-based teachers, teacher trainers, and material

designers could be more aware of how to make the best use of TBLT as a scaffolding in

practical lesson design and teaching practice. The research purposes are consistent with

the expected ends of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam: English for real

communication.

1.3 Aims of the study and research questions

The current study aims to investigate Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers'

beliefs and practices regarding the use of Task-Based Language Teaching methodology

in vocabulary instruction. Despite the fact that TBLT has been introduced and applied to

foreign language teaching in Vietnam (MOET, 2006), classroom-based teachers may

encounter various challenges vis-à-vis teaching context-related factors when applying

TBLT in the classroom. Teachers have urgent demands for being supported with guidelines and practical applicable teaching techniques for class content design and delivery. The goal of the study is to generalize Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of TBLT in teaching vocabulary, and to explore what factors are associated with teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice. The research findings will serve as a piece of the puzzle of EFL teaching and learning at the high-school level in Vietnam. Besides, the current study aims to identify potential challenges classroom-based teachers may face up to when they approach new language teaching methodologies. The analysis of the collected data serves as a basis for the proposal of prospective practical approaches toward technique selection and design for vocabulary instruction in the classrooms.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the three following questions:

1. To what extent do Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers report that they use Task-Based Language Teaching to teach vocabulary?
2. Is there a significant correlation between teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience?
3. What challenges and constraints are Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers facing in employing TBLT for vocabulary instruction?

The first question scrutinizes the extent to which high-school EFL teachers' pedagogic knowledge of TBLT influences their teaching practice in the classrooms, specifically in teaching vocabulary. The second question looks into the relationship between classroom-based teaching experiences and task-based vocabulary instruction capacity. Finally, the research examines what factors may prevent classroom-based teachers from applying TBLT in the classroom.

1.4 Significance of the study

The current study is expected to contribute to the existing literature of EFL in general and TBLT application in vocabulary teaching in particular. One of the paramount causes for learners to learn English is that English has emerged as an international language. Teachers' application of the study results in the classrooms may meet learners' actual needs of learning English for basic communication. Hopefully, the proper use of TBLT in classrooms opens a new horizon of vocabulary learning and teaching in Vietnamese high schools. From the theoretical point of view, the study should help practitioners in the field of EFL teaching and learning to better understand classroom-based teachers' characteristics and beliefs regarding task-based vocabulary instruction practice. From the practical point of view, the results of the study will advance our knowledge about how the Vietnamese education system works and what challenges and constraints teachers have to overcome to implement the chosen teaching methodology.

In terms of the contribution to the professional field, the findings of the study are expected to benefit not only Vietnamese high-school teachers but EFL teachers in other contexts as well. The initial bricks of TBLT application in vocabulary instruction have been laid, paving the way for more potential research. Teacher trainers, teaching material designers, and curriculum planners would use the results of the study as a source of reference for their future work.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is made up of six chapters. The introduction seeks to present a background panorama of the study. Following is chapter 2, which provides an account of literature on which the study is situated. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used for

data collection. Research findings are reported in chapter 4. Chapter 5 is devoted to discussion. The limitations of the study and recommendation for further research are also included in this part. Chapter 6 aims to wrap up the study with the conclusion and a throwback of the pedagogical, methodological, and theoretical implications of the study findings.

Following the present chapter is chapter 2, which reviews the literature related to the study.

CHAPTER II   LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the history of foreign language education, a great number of techniques, methodologies, and approaches have come into being, presumably stemming from the need of learners and practitioners. For the current time, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been emerging as a prominent approach in the area of language teaching in general and in teaching English as a second/foreign language in particular (Robertson, 2014). The concept of task was first introduced formally in the works by Long and Prabhu (see, e.g., Long, 1985; Prabhu, 1987). Task quickly garnered recognition among educators and researchers for its vitality and versatility as an instructional tool, research instrument, and learning activity (Ellis, 2003). TBLT can be employed as an efficacious strategy in assisting learners to develop their particular areas of language.

Vocabulary knowledge is among the central components of any language system, requiring the attention of language learners. Vocabulary is a prerequisite for one to be able to function in the second language (Alizadeh, 2016). However, it is unequivocal to state that EFL learners do not have massive exposure to the target language as they do in their first language learning (Samaranayake, 2016). This EFL learning condition, needless to say, diminishes learners' opportunities to pick up a new language and activate it for communicative purposes. Assumedly, the more students interact with others in a language, the more proficient their competence of conversational language use will be. The birth of TBLT can be deemed as a compensation for learners' inadequacies of interacting with the target language outside the classroom as language lessons hinging upon TBLT offer "a logical development" of communicative language (Richards &

Rodgers, 2001). Using vocabulary taught in the class to address daily tasks is both the learning goals and the linguistic foundation for students to achieve a higher level of proficiency.

A literature review on related variables examines how effectively TBLT may be used for assisting Vietnamese EFL learners to enrich their repertoire of vocabulary knowledge, and how useful vocabulary acquisition, through task performance, is to their communication. The section provides a brief account of the Vietnamese education system as well as foreign language education, the history of TBLT foundation and TBLT attributes, and vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom.

2.1   Vietnam education context

2.1.1   An overview of sociocultural and educational context of Vietnam

Vietnam, a country rich in cultural values dating back to 2879 BC, is the essence of multicultural intersection throughout its history. First ruled by the Chinese for more than a millennium, and then colonized by the French before Northern and Southern Vietnam broke into war, with the U.S supporting the Southern part, Vietnam of the present is the outcome of the melding of foreign and indigenous cultures. In Asian history, generally, regional cultures were robustly imbued with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Noticeably, due to the longest period of time and geographical connection with Chinese culture, Vietnamese society bears a strong resemblance to China's in terms of ideological and educational attributes (Canh, 2007). According to Huyen (2002), educational and intellectual activities of Vietnamese people are permeated with the thought and belief included in three doctrines of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Chinese cultural domination for more than 1000 years, from 111 B.C to A.D 939

(SarDesai, 1998), in which Confucianism was the staple of the feudal education system,

has influenced the behavior model in Vietnamese culture. Though the majority of

Vietnamese people claim themselves as pure Buddhists, their life is largely instilled with

the philosophical values of Confucianism. The popular motto in almost all schools in

Vietnam so far is *"Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn"* (First learn the rite, and then learn the

lesson), and to some extent stands for the intellectual and educational philosophy pursued

in Vietnamese educational context. Moral education is always the central part

incorporated into the curriculum at all schools in Vietnam. School children are expected

to behave and act in accordance with a set of so-called standard ethics and etiquette.

Children should express their absolute respect and obedience towards what teachers,

parents, and the elderly transfer to them because they are considered to be more

experienced and knowledgeable than children; they are mature enough to teach children

in any aspect of life.

During that period, then Vietnam education system, including language, was the

duplication of China system. In other words, Confucianism was the center of all

educational manipulation in Vietnam over that period of 1000 years (London, 2011;

Marr, 1981; SarDesai, 2005). Confucian classics underscore how important hierarchy of

power, wealth, and social status are to educational opportunities (London, 2011). Such

influences of Chinese education on Vietnamese education system is believed to leave

consequences on the present, particularly in learning and teaching behaviors. Tuong

(2002, p. 1) states that values of Chinese culture "coexist, rather than [to] replace,

traditional culture and Vietnamese language." When it comes to the nature of Taoism

doctrine, the emphasis is placed on "resignation and inaction," which consequently leads to "passivity, disinterest in scientific studies and a sense of fatalism" (Canh, 2007, p. 10). Thus, those advocating this doctrine view and react towards the world with the sense of expected balance, order, and harmony. Buddhism, first introduced into Vietnamese society by Indian Buddhist monks, then became popular among the peasant class thanks to its alignment with initial "animism" of Vietnamese people (Canh, 2007); meanwhile, Confucianism during feudalism was still strongly held among the ruling class as an invisible weapon to maintain and reinforce their authority.

Buddhism then quickly merged with Confucianism to become dominant among Vietnamese society through the act of teaching and learning taking place in monasteries and educational institutes of that time. This phenomenon is reasoned by the fact that the first Vietnamese Confucian scholars were Buddhist monks (Huyen, 2002). Consequently, the combination of two doctrines is inevitable during their act of spreading life philosophies. Three doctrines—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—together have impacted present-day Vietnamese cultural life. Those philosophies left their mark in most Vietnamese educational institutes, in which teachers are regarded as knowledge transmitters, and learners are sole knowledge receivers, somehow restricting learners' creativity and teachers' flexibility.

Among five educational philosophies listed in the work *Teachers, Schools, and Society* by authors Sadker and Zittleman (2010)—including Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructivism and Existentialism—the philosophy supposedly attached to Vietnam education system at that time would have been Essentialism and Perennialism. Essentialism highly values the essence of knowledge transmitted from the

prior generations. Perennialism focuses on the importance of great books and their timeless expertise. Meanwhile, Progressivism and Social Reconstructivism pay much heed to the relationship between schooling and social experiences. Existentialism addresses the purposes of human existence. Every philosophy has its own values and reflection on its agents. Students attitudes towards the world will significantly rely on what and how they are taught. Vietnamese learners in the past absolutely treasured the values of books and rote memory, leading to knowledge complacency and lack of originality. Huyen (2002) stresses that the "exaggerated respect of books inevitably made old teachers transform their students into veritable receptacles. Committing to memory was an absolute priority…Written exercises were only aimed at consolidating the memorizing of the formulas of the book. The students, due to being constantly in this passive role, became incapable of reflection and personal judgment" (p. 293).

Vietnamese history began a new phase when Western cultures brought merchants and missionaries. It cannot be denied that the salient upshot of such contact was the birth of Romanized Vietnamese script by Alexandre de Rhodes, a French missionary (Canh, 2007). Such an invention of the language system is believed to have an enormous impact on the quality and quantity of Vietnamese educational opportunities.

Until the nineteenth century, Vietnam was colonized by the French, which led to substantial changes in the Vietnamese education system in general and in educational philosophy in particular. The presence of the French in Vietnam put a stop to Confucian institutions (London, 2011), ultimately marked with the final official Confucian examinations held in 1918. The French initiated reform of the educational system in their colonial land in terms of setting up new educational institutions and curricula, both based

on French templates. Evidently, French was treated as the official language used for learning and teaching at that time. Such educational reconstructions were intended for the benefits of the colonial government. Similar to the feudal education system, the opportunities of accessing education was a privilege mostly for those of high strata in the society. The French educational colonization accounts for the high percentage (up to 95%) of illiteracy among the Vietnamese at that time (Ministry of Education and Training, 1995). In 1954, however, French colonialism was officially terminated by the emergence of Vietnamese anti-colonial intelligentsia and patriots.

Later, it is the 20-year war (1954 – 1975) against the interference of the United States that divided the country into two parts, each with quite different educational systems. The Northern part adopted the education model of the Soviet Union; meanwhile, the education in the Southern part was based on the format of America.

In April 1975, when the war ended and two parts of the country reunified, many educational changes were conducted to meet the new demands of nation's situation. Such changes are anchored in the values of the two former education systems. To date, after having undergone a variety of changes and reformations, the Vietnam education system has been to some extent well-established with a structure of five levels of schooling including pre-school, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary. Nevertheless, the effects of Confucian doctrine on Vietnam educational activities have yet to be wiped out; as London (2011) put it: "Confucian thought and Confucian-inspired social institutions had wide impacts on the development of education systems in Vietnam and legacies of these impacts remain" (p. 8).

The most conspicuous influence Confucianism has exerted on Vietnam educational philosophy must be exam-orientated and teacher-centered class. Teaching and learning performance is to gear towards meeting the needs of a great deal of tests and examinations. Both teachers and learners have been struggling to meet the needs of an array of local and national exams. Of one student's entire academic life, various examinations need to be taken before being able to arrive at the gate of any university. Students are forced to follow the social rule as the outcome of the exams are regarded to have great power to navigate their life. For that reason, both learners, teachers, and parents are devoted themselves to and compete for exams, which inadvertently distorts the particular capacity and potentials of children. Children in Vietnam spend five years at primary school, often starting at the age of 6 and finishing at the age of 12. After that, they continue their lower secondary school, which ranges from grade 6 to grade 9. Though students do not have to take any formal examination to be verified as lower secondary school graduate, they need to sit for a compulsory examination to be selected for specific upper secondary schools, which cover grades 10 to 12. They end their time at upper secondary school with an integrated, otherwise known as *2 in 1*, national examination, which was first implemented in 2015. This examination is the combination of two former exams, a higher secondary school graduation exam and a university entrance exam. The result of the integrated national exam is used for high school graduation and university and college entrance. In this exam, the composite of three subjects consisting of mathematics, literature, and English is fixed and compulsory; however, optional subjects are also part of the structure. At least, one optional subject must be chosen from five subjects including Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, and

Geography, aggregated with the three fixed subjects to make up a group of four required for upper secondary school graduation.

To be admitted into a college or university in Vietnam, in the national upper secondary school examination, students must choose a specific group of subjects matching with the requirement of the field of study they choose. Contemporarily, there are four main groups of subjects, which enable students to apply for professional degrees (see Table 1).

Table 1. The main categories used for college and university admission in Vietnam.
(* Foreign Language currently available for category D including English, French, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and German)

Categories	Subjects for college or university admission	Examples of field of study students can choose
A	Maths, Physics, Chemistry	Education, Economics, Finance, Computer Science, Pharmacy, Laws, Math Studies, Human Resource Management, etc.
A1	Maths, Physics, English	Education, Economics, Finance, Engineering, Computer Sciences, Economics, International Relations, etc.
B	Maths, Chemistry, Biology	Education, Medical Sciences, Biological Studies, Environmental Studies, Veterinary Science, Forestry, etc.
C	Vietnamese Literature, History, Geography	Education, Literature Studies, Journalism, Humanities, Laws, Psychology, Politics, Linguistics, Social Work, etc.
D	Maths, Vietnamese Literature, Foreign Language*	Education, Economics, Finance, International Relations, Communications, Laws, Social Work, etc.

Apart from those supposedly life-decisive exams, Vietnamese students have to take a great number of diagnostic, formative, benchmark, and summative tests during their time at school. These tests make both learners and teachers devote themselves substantially to the sole purpose of passing the exams or tests rather than cultivate their reflective and critical thinking. The origin of development is finding and solving problems. However, the educational philosophy, held by those who are concerned about education in Vietnam, is more associated with the theoretical knowledge inheritance than with practical training and creation. Exams and tests designed on the basis of rote memorization and theoretical knowledge are employed to measure and evaluate learners' and teachers' capacity. This fact has been generalized in a study by Canh (2011) as follows:

> The emphasis on on-off exams that function as gatekeeper to higher education opportunities strongly influences the attitudes of student knowledge and learning styles. They try as hard as they can to memorize as much as possible the factual knowledge in order to 'return' that knowledge at the examination. (p. 17)

Particularly, at the end of grade 9 and grade 12, students have to cram for exams to get a ticket into an upper secondary school and a college or a university, respectively, giving rise to the proliferation of extra classes and crash exam-training courses. In the aftermath of this exam-orientated learning and teaching is the minimal attention paid to other subjects such as physical education, civics, and technology. In reality, those subjects are often treated as supplementary subjects, for they are not incorporated in exams for school graduation or university admission.

The center of the class is supposed to be the teacher, not the student. This teacher-centered approach should be an indicator of the effects educational philosophies in the

past placed on Vietnam's current education. Traditional educational beliefs and practices are still popularly held among Vietnamese learners, teachers, and educational stakeholders. There is a clear division between power holders in the classroom, teachers, and the followers, learners. Learners are instilled to play the passive role in the class and expected to act upon teachers' directions all the time. Teachers are regarded as "the embodiment of knowledge" (Cam Le, 2005). Students lack the critical skill to dig into the possible problems of whatever subject is raised in the class. They are reluctant to challenge themselves and others to develop. They would like to linger on the conception of being in harmony and complacency rather than in the sense of discovery. They are not motivated to get out of their comfort zone for creation and originality. These misconceptions seem to hold both learners and teachers back from their zone of proximal development. Traditional class behaviors block the connection between what students should learn and what they are expected to face in real life (Cam Le, 2005). The phenomenon of the asymmetric roles between learners and teachers in the classroom is an additional obvious mark that Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism doctrines have left on Vietnam's current education system. The pressure caused by the traditional standard of being *"con ngoan, trò giỏi" (i.e., good child, good learner)*, a paradigm for Vietnamese students to follow, turns into an invisible source of tyranny over their faculty of creativeness, self-independence, risk-taking, and critical thinking. Students are guided to follow a set of socially-molded standards instead of challenging themselves to define and identify who they are. The common whole picture of a classroom in Vietnam is described through the lens of Tuong (2002):

Vietnamese students are very traditional in their learning styles: they are quiet and attentive, good at memorizing and following directions, reluctant to participate (though knowing the answers), shy away from oral skills (being more comfortable with grammar and writing exercises) and from group interaction; they are meticulous in note-taking, they go 'by the book' and rely on printed information, and regard the teacher as the complete source of knowledge. (p. 4)

Along with traditional learning styles comes a large number of students in one class, which necessarily deteriorates the quality of education (Horton, 2011; Yelkpieri, Namale, Esia-Donkoh, & Ofosu-Dwamena, 2012). It is not rare to see a class size of 40 to 50 students in Vietnam. The crowded number of students in one class surely overwhelms teachers' ability to control, not to mention the quality of lessons. Teachers often find it difficult to design differentiated lesson plans to meet students' individual needs. The consequences include leaving many students behind academically. They inevitably lag behind and finally are labeled as the 'black sheep' of schools. Additionally, the very traditional class configuration and limited school facility are hindering the possibility of increasing the quality of lessons. Long benches are placed in rows, making it harder for interactive and cooperative forms of learning to take place. With this kind of class configuration, the least challenging way of conducting lessons most of the Vietnamese teachers have been employing is monologue lecturing. Students simply need to take notes based on lectures and what is written on the board, which then are internalized with their rote memorization.

As for sources of teaching materials, mandated textbooks along with prescribed syllabus mapped out by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) are considered as the core source of knowledge, and stipulate what teachers should follow, when they should teach, and how much time teachers should allocate for instruction and assessment

(MOET, 2006). The agents of classrooms are offered very little autonomy in content

selection. They are both surrounded by the oppression of so-called mandated textbooks.

They suffer the fear of breaking the "rule of the game" if the book is left unfinished (Viet,

2013). Teachers' passion for being more creative in teaching and learners' interest in

discovering knowledge outside the classroom tend to be stagnated.

Contemporarily, at the level of upper secondary schools in Vietnam, there exists a

system of so-called schools for the gifted, a legacy of Soviet Union education model

(Canh, 2011). Both teachers and students in this type of school are competitively

selected. Students often have to sit for a very challenging selection exam held by the

school to have a slot in the classes of specialized subjects. Time of instruction for specific

subjects they specialize in will be more than others. Also, the textbooks and other

supplementary learning materials they use are much more advanced than usual. However,

the common issues found in this system of schools are sole knowledge transmission and

exam-based. Students try to digest as much factual knowledge as possible conveyed by

teachers, and then 'return' it in a variety of local, national, and international exams for

rewards and prizes.

Exam-orientated curriculum is one of the major challenges facing the whole

educational system in particular and the whole Vietnamese society in general (Ngan,

2017). Emphasis is placed more on the end product than on progress. The dominance of

the summative assessment paradigm has posed severe effects on the way educational

institutions, teachers, and learners work. All target the socially-merited rewards as

destinations rather than self-improvement and self-development. Learners do not study

for their own passions, interests, and potentials. They study for external factors of oppression to meet social standards.

2.1.2   English as a foreign language in Vietnamese high school context

Foreign language teaching in Vietnam is accompanied by political, economic, and social changes, which, according to Denham (1992), "Vietnam's linguistic history reflects its political history" (p. 61). Vietnamese society has experienced different phases of development since its declaration of independence in 1945. From that time on, many significant changes in foreign language teaching and learning have been taking place in accordance with political, economic, and social contexts. Different phases of Vietnamese society are featured with the heyday of different foreign languages, which is summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Dominant foreign languages taught in Vietnam since 1945

Period of time	*Dominant foreign languages taught in Vietnam*
1945-1954	French and English
1954-1975	English in the Southern part; Russian and Chinese in the Northern
1975-1979	Russian and Chinese
1979-1986	Russian
1986-present	English – most dominant; other languages such as French, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, etc.

The economic reformation policies in the 1980s have marked a watershed in the act of teaching and learning English in the Vietnamese context. It has become the foreign language most taught in Vietnam since that time. The popularity of English is confirmed by Canh (2007) as follows:

For the first time in the country's many-thousand-year-long history, English emerged as the most important foreign language, which was chosen by most students. (p. 172)

2.1.2.1 The period of 1945 – 1954

This nine-year phase of the long history of Vietnam is marked with the colonialism of the French, which accounts for the dominance of French learning and teaching in most of the educational institutions during that time. English, on the other hand, was taught as a foreign language in Vietnam and was not as popular as French, the language of the colonial government from 1945 to 1954.

2.1.2.2 The period of 1954 – 1975

The year 1954 marked a new phase of Vietnam's history when the country was divided into two parts: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. It goes without saying that education in general and foreign language teaching in particular are closely tied to the government of each part. The Northern part of Vietnam was tied with the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and China; hence, Russian and Chinese were selected as the main foreign languages at all schools in the Northern part; meanwhile, the Southern government was in alliance with the U.S government, which made English the most prevalent foreign language there. In spite of the fact that English was still learned by a certain number of learners in North Vietnam, it was treated as the 'language of the enemy' and taught for the political purposes rather than any other motivations.

2.1.2.3 The period of 1975 – 1986

In 1975, Vietnam was reunified with the victory of North Vietnam, which, accordingly, took Russian and Chinese to their heydays all over Vietnam. However, in the following years, Vietnam and China's relationship came into a crisis, which ended up

with a border war in 1979. The event signaled the termination of Chinese learning and teaching as the main foreign language in Vietnam. Due to political changes, Russian gained more and more popularity at secondary and tertiary levels. Students learned Russian for two major purposes: further academic pursuit and professional development. Many Vietnamese students at that time were sent to countries in the former USSR for either further study or employment opportunities. More teachers of the Russian language were trained than ever. English, for that reason, was paid minimal attention. Hoang (2011) describes that English was only taught in some upper secondary schools in large cities.

2.1.2.4   The period of 1986 – Present

Vietnam's economy experienced a serious decrease after the reunification, which urged the new government to come up with proper economic development strategies. In December 1986, in the Sixth Party Congress, an overwhelmingly significant economic policy called *'Đổi mới'* (i.e., Renovation) was released, creating a milestone in Vietnam's orientation towards economic development strategies (Vuong, 2014). The initiation of *'Đổi mới'* indicated a rejection to the economic model of the former USSR, central planning, and management. For the very first time, the 'open-door' policy, along with the market-driven economy, was adopted in Vietnam. More than ever, Vietnam made efforts to establish the relationship with and welcome the investment from foreign countries. In the context of English used as an official international language for communication in almost all fields, Vietnamese people quickly adopted the trend. English became more prominent in the classroom than ever (Canh, 2011). There was a sharp increase in the number of learners of English. They studied English with the aim of studying abroad and

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garnering the opportunities to work in foreign-invested enterprises or any job requiring English competence. More sources of materials for English learning and English centers were available in Vietnam.

Particularly, the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991 signaled a stop to the prime of Russian language teaching and learning, simultaneously promoting the importance of English in the new phase of Vietnam.

For the practical role of English and the increasing needs of English use in life, English was chosen to be the main foreign language taught in almost all secondary schools in Vietnam. Also, English was incorporated into the group of core subjects for official secondary graduation examinations. At tertiary education level, most students selected English for the foreign language course. During the 1990s, a certificate of English competence was regarded as a bonus for those seeking employment opportunities. Ergo, English extra classes started to spread throughout Vietnam. Learning English became a 'hot trend' for the whole society.

To meet the demands of learners and employment markets, in large cities such as Ha Noi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh, many international schools and universities were established. In these educational institutions, along with the teaching curricula mostly adapted from the ones used in developed countries, English is utilized as the main medium of instruction and testing (Viet, 2013).

The serious shortage of English language teachers during the 1990s came as a consequence of the exponential growth in the number of learners of English (Canh, 2007). Though every year a large number of pre-service English language teachers were trained and graduated from colleges and universities all over Vietnam, a great many

positions of English language teachers needed to be filled. There were two main reasons

for the occurrence: skyrocketing number of English language learners within a short time

and pre-service English language teachers' seeking for more well-paid jobs instead of

teaching.

To deal with such a problem, many colleges and universities were allowed to

implement a so-called *'tại chức'* (i.e., off-campus) English language teacher education

program right in provinces (Viet, 2013). The program was aimed for those who would

like to become an English language teacher, but failed in official university entrance

examinations. Another solution executed by the Ministry of Education and Training in

the late 1980s and early 1990s was retraining Russian language teachers to become

English language teachers (Viet, 2013). This act was also considered as 'killing two birds

with one stone': providing more English language teachers and bringing jobs for

redundant Russian language teachers. Even students majoring in the Russian language

during that time were encouraged to take additional English as a foreign language

courses, which enabled them to become a teacher of English later. So far, English

language proficiency and teaching methodology of those teachers remain a big issue to be

addressed. Axiomatically, the above-mentioned incidences are somewhat responsible for

the low quality of English language learning and teaching in Vietnam (Viet, 2013).

A common view of learning and teaching in Vietnam is that though learners

spend several years studying at school, they hardly communicate in basic English right

after upper secondary school graduation. Some may continue to take English courses at

their tertiary education, but there is often no improvement in their English proficiency.

Canh (2007) ascribes the case to two factors including low quality of English language

teachers and lack of supplementary teaching resources. The generation of teachers, who come from the time of 'English language teacher deficit crisis', is hardly retrained adequately to be linguistically and methodologically proficient. Furthermore, in-service English language teachers in Vietnam find it hard to expose themselves to supplementary sources of teaching instruction and professional development opportunities. In reality, most in-service English language teachers in Vietnam confine themselves with what they have been taught at universities, and experiences they accumulate from their own teaching practice. They are hardly retrained or updated with theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the latest language teaching techniques, methodologies, and approaches. The fact has been reported by Canh (2002) that "teachers are generally incapable of teaching English communicatively in their real-world classrooms. Instead, they spend most of their lesson time explaining abstract grammar rules and guiding their students in choral readings" (p. 33). Limited teaching facilities are an additional element that deteriorates the quality of English lessons. Traditionally, in an English as a foreign language classroom, the sole tools teachers can use for their teaching are chalk and board, along with the mandated textbooks. There is often an absence of technology application in every class, either because of the unavailability of teaching technology devices or teachers' unwillingness to use them in class.

One of the major hindrances to the improvement of English language teaching-learning quality in Vietnam is both teachers' and learners' resistance to communicative language teaching methods (Canh & Barnard, 2009). Generally, the most used language teaching methodology in most of the Vietnam schools now is grammar translation, in which the role of teachers is to explain English grammatical rules and vocabulary

explicitly in Vietnamese, and the role of students is noting and remembering. Language could not become 'real' unless it is used communicatively. Thus, English language learned and taught in most Vietnam schools seems to lack authenticity and meaningfulness. Such a passive language teaching approach also demotivates learners from their faculty of delivering communication in the target language. Students become used to the rote learning style and resistant to interactive and communicative learning manner. Obviously, both learners and teachers emphasize language knowledge display over communicative competence. It is widely assumed in Vietnam language teaching and learning context that English learning and teaching should seek to enrich learners' language knowledge for the salient purpose of passing exams, which, needless to say, discourages them from any effort of learning English for real communication.

Recently, Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching methods have been introduced into Vietnam. However, there are many challenges for those who advocate the new foreign language teaching methods to overthrow the dominance of such traditional methods as grammar translation, for its being over-seated in Vietnam class for decades (Bock, 2000). For classroom-based EFL teachers' limited knowledge about how to conduct those latest worldwide well-recognized teaching methods and confronting with educational oppressions, for instance, exam-passing quota and fixed curricula, teachers tend to give up and come back with the 'road taken by everyone'.

Another impediment to the development of foreign language teaching and learning in Vietnam is the lack of favorable environment for the target language communication (Loi, 2011). Teachers transmit the target language to Vietnamese EFL

learners with the purpose of serving examinations. Though nowadays learners able to access a variety of online sources of English, language used in those online channels seem incompatible with language taught in the classroom (Loi, 2011). Vietnamese learners limit themselves to in-class language; consequently, they become confused and diffident to use English in daily life communication (Ngan, 2017). Vietnamese learners' over-emphasis on the accuracy of language compromises their fluency and their confidence to speak out.

2.1.3   EFL teaching and learning innovations in Vietnam

During a long period of time from the early 1980s to early 2000s, the traditional method of grammar translation was dominant in the English language teaching class in Vietnam, displayed through two sets of textbooks in use mandated by the Ministry of Education (now Ministry of Education and Training – MOET) (Denham, 1992). There existed two sets of English textbooks for two separate English learning and teaching programs, a three – year course and seven-year course. The former set was for learners to start learning English at grade 10, continuing to grade 12; meanwhile, those using the former set of textbooks started their English learning journey much earlier, from grade 6, and finished the program at grade 12. The common point of both sets of books is the overemphasis on reading, followed by grammar and vocabulary exercises, and pronunciation drills. However, whatever component of language is being taught, the methodology employed for knowledge transmission is grammar translation, which, in general, could not help learners promote their communicative competence to an adequate level.

In 2002, a new set of books was introduced and put into practice by MOET, a sign

of the significant changes in English language teaching and learning orientation. Under

the new program, English was compulsory at grade 6 in almost all lower secondary

schools, and elective at primary schools. A remarkable feature of the new curriculum is

underscoring the importance of four-skill proficiency to learners' English communication

success, though much attention was still paid to reading, grammar, phonetics, and

vocabulary, which was expected to be memorized in decontextualized manner. The

objectives of the new curriculum were briefly stated as follows:

At the end of the upper secondary school level, students will be able:

- To use English as a means of communication at a certain level of proficiency in four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and to be able to read materials at the same level of their textbooks, using a dictionary;
- To have mastered basic English phonetics and grammar; to have acquired the minimum of around 2500 vocabulary items of English; and
- To attain a certain level of understanding of English and American cultures; to become aware of cross-cultural differences in order to be better overall communicators, to better inform the world of the Vietnamese people, their history and culture, and to take pride in Vietnam, its language and culture.
(MOET, 2006, cited in Hoang, 2011, p. 11)

Nevertheless, since the introduction of the new textbooks in 2002, little

improvement in the quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam was witnessed.

The lack of progress urged MOET to launch a new curriculum to propagate the most

recognized language teaching methodologies among teachers. The new curriculum was

still based on the source of textbooks introduced in 2002. Nonetheless, two central points

stated in the new curriculum, learner-centered and communicative, made it different from

the previous ones. It can be clearly seen that the focus of the lesson has been supposed to

shift from teachers to learners, and the ultimate goal of learning English is to serve

communication needs. In order to accomplish such goals, it behooves both teachers and learners to act as active roles in the class with the application of communicative task-based pedagogy (MOET, 2006, p. 14). The cornerstone of the new curriculum lies in the act of integrating "a grammar component into a CLT curriculum with the underlying assumption that teachers will focus on developing students' communicative competence in English with CLT methods while teaching grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary separately" (Canh, 2011). More specifically, teachers are expected to head forward to teaching and learning components of English in contexts to make it authentic and meaningful, leading to learners' communication efficiency in English.

Along with the breakthrough in methodology orientation, assessment was innovated with the introduction of formative evaluation by the Ministry of Education and Training. However, there was no clear or specific instruction and guidance for teaching practitioners to follow. In reality, such a campaign of English teaching and learning innovation was not as successful as expected due to many administrators, educators, and teachers' resistance to making changes (Canh, 2011).

After many efforts to upgrade the English language competence of Vietnamese learners, in September 2008 a national-scale plan for such a duty was initiated with the official name '2020 National Foreign Language Project' administered by the Ministry of Education and Training. The set goals of the project are:

> By 2020, most of the Vietnamese youth graduating from secondary schools, colleges, and universities have the ability to speak foreign languages independently and confidently in communication, and to learn and work in a multilingual, multicultural, and integrated environment; making foreign language a strength of Vietnamese people, serving the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country (MOET, 2008).

For the very first time, English has been taught at grade level 3, meaning that every student has at least 10 years of learning English before graduating from upper secondary schools. In order to fulfill the project, the major agents of teaching practice, teachers, have been offered many opportunities to develop both teaching skills and English language proficiency. These professional development programs have been carried out regionally and provincially. Teachers at high schools have been re-trained by English university lecturers right at their provinces, or sent to regional central universities, for training. So far, the National Foreign Language 2020 Project has been more than two-thirds completed, with nearly ten trillion dongs invested, but the effect seems not to reach the expectations.

Indeed, how to improve English language teaching and learning in general, while helping Vietnamese learners develop their English competence to the level that makes them an effective communicator, remains a difficult question for administrators, educators, curriculum designers, and teachers. The now-famous language teaching methodologies, in spite of their having been introduced and taken hold in Vietnam, have yet to be employed for the maximal effectiveness in improving learners' English competence (Koosha and Yakhabi, 2013). For this concern, the present research seeks to propose the potential of employing communicative language teaching strategies based on textbooks to better learners' conversational language use abilities. This faculty of language use should enable students at least to communicate at the basic level.

2.2   Task-Based Language Teaching

2.2.1   Theoretical frameworks for Task-Based Language Teaching

Teaching practice is strengthened by an understanding of pedagogy, and pedagogy is strengthened by an understanding of the theoretical framework that underpins it (Robertson, 2014, p. 188).

As Robertson stated, the appearance of any pedagogical approach must be based on a well-established theoretical framework. TBLT is viewed as a breakthrough in language teaching, anchoring itself in the essence of previous language teaching methods including Communicative Language Teaching, Sociocultural Theory, Experiential Learning, Interaction, Comprehensible Input, and the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis.

2.2.1.1   Communicative language teaching

The Communicative Approach, in which learners acquire language through their authentic language use, is viewed as the precursor to TBLT (Ellis, 2003; Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). TBLT is regarded as the strong version of the Communicative Approach, in which learners use the target language to complete tasks; as a consequence, students acquire language. As an innovation in language teaching pedagogy, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was first introduced in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s, and was then quickly popularized by two language teaching and testing organizations, the British Council and the Council of Europe. As implied by the name of the method itself, tasks are considered the part and parcel of TBLT (Ellis, 2003). Task-based teaching framework comes as an important common quality between two methods, CLT and TBLT.

Nunan (2004) described Savignon, one of the initiators of CLT, as successful in capturing the nature of this language teaching approach:

> In Europe, during the 1970s, the language needs of a rapidly increasing group of immigrants and guest workers, and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behavior, led to the Council of Europe development of a syllabus for learners based on functional – notional concepts of language use and . . . a threshold level of language ability was described for each of the languages of Europe in terms of what learners should be able to *do* with the language (van Ek 1975). Functions were based on assessment of learner needs and specified the end result, the *product*, of an instructional program. The term *communicative* was used to describe programs that used a functional-notional syllabus based on needs assessment, and the language for specific purposes (LSP) movement was launched. (Savignon, 2002, pp. 1-2)

The emergence of CLT has shattered the monopoly of traditional product-oriented language teaching approaches and "principally structural or lexical lists", making room for the existence of learning process evaluation and "lists of functions and notions" (Nunan, 2004). Students' ability to communicate in the target language became the top priority of language teaching programs. "Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques" (Brown 1994, p. 245), distinguishing CLT from such earlier language teaching methods as Situational Language Teaching, the Audio-lingual Method, or Grammar Translation. Learners are expected to look at communicative proficiency instead of mastery of grammatical structures and decontextualized vocabulary as the primary target (Candlin, 1981; Widdowson, 1978).

Language is created for communication, which encompasses two main functions of interaction and transaction (Brown & Yule, 1983). To be clear, language is used as a means of communication, in which interlocutors aim to both maintain interaction and convey information. This assumption has been a continuum of language teaching and

learning principles and practices, which is to some extent reflected in early methods such as the audiolingual or oral-situated method (Ellis, 2003). It is believed that any language teaching method or approach coming into being should focus on facilitating learners' communicative competence. The birth of CLT alludes to the view of language as a means of communication, and whether it is either processes or goals of a language classroom, 'communicative competence' should be the navigator to be followed (Savignon, 2002).

The functional model of language proposed by Halliday (1970), and the theory of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1967, 1972), are regarded as the theoretical bases for CLT. The central theoretical concept of "communicative competence" was mentioned in works by many researchers in the early 1970s (e.g. Habermas 1970; Jakobovits 1970; Savignon 1971). In his proposal in 1972, Hymes believed that the concept of communicative competence was an integration of linguistic theory and theory of communication and culture. Hymes pointed out that communicative competence should satisfactorily deal with four following elements:

- Whether (and to what extent) something is formally possible;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- Whether (and to what extent) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
- Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entail. (Hymes, 1972, p. 281)

Brown (2000) also emphasized communicative competence as one of the most important principles for language teaching practice. He underlines the importance of allowing learners to use authentic language in the class, which they may encounter later in life. Learners are expected to become successful communicators when adequately using language in social contexts. The role of teacher is stressed, but not centered.

Teachers can flexibly play the roles of a facilitator, an advisor or a co-communicator. It is learners who will be responsible for language production through in-class activities. Because the intent of the method is for communicative competence facilitation, communication-driven activities such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks have been rigorously used. These activities are composed of three key components: information gap, choice, and feedback. An additional hallmark of this method is the intensive use of authentic materials, which expose students to how language is actually used.

Similarly, Halliday (1975) placed much emphasis on the magnitude of contextualized speech acts or texts, as he believed that all nuances of meaning would be precisely captured only when language was in use. In the study, Halliday introduced seven basic categories of functional language closely linked to the first language acquisition found in children: the instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and presentative function. Clearly, the focal point of CLT is that language must be context- and culture-embedded. CLT deals with the goal of developing not only linguistic knowledge but communicative competence, the ability to use language effectively and meaningfully in communication discourse for learners (Ellis, 2003; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Kumaravadivelu (2006) emphasizes that "competence in terms of social interaction" is deemed as the priority of this method. These assumptions, obviously, are the prominent features found in Task-Based Language Teaching, described by Nunan (2004, p.1) as "an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language."

In light of how exactly language can be acquired by learners based on the concept of language in use, CLT turns out *not* to be monolithic and uniform (Ellis, 2003). Specifically, there are two versions of CLT identified, which are labeled as *weak* and *strong* (Littlewood, 1981; Howatt, 1984). Though the ultimate goals set by both versions are to equip learners with language knowledge accompanied with communicative competence, they are not the same in instructing learners to acquire language as a system. The distinction majorly touches upon two elements of language: its structural system and communication functions.

There is a coincidence in the classification of CLT and TBLT. The *weak* version of CLT is built upon the hypothesis that learners are able to identify the target language necessary for communication through systematic instruction. This approach refers to the act of teaching learners to internalize language knowledge instead of explicitly offering (Howatt, 1984). The *strong* version, in contrast, has a different approach in instructing language learners to pick up their language for communicative competence; specifically, learners acquire the target language by engaging in interacting and communicating with others (Howatt, 1984). Instead of viewing language as a structural system to be learned, learners gear towards developing their communication competence, their use of language, and figuring out the existence of the system. These two versions of CLT are considered to match with the categorization of task-supported language teaching and task-based language teaching in TBLT, respectively, regarding how task is used as a tool of teaching (Ellis, 2003).

The pronounced view of language learning shared by the *weak* form of CLT and task-supported language teaching is reflected through the present-practice-produce (PPP)

procedure. In classrooms where PPP is used, target language items are often introduced first through examples, followed by controlled practices called 'exercises' before students are given opportunities to produce their own language using provided language items. Tasks are utilized within the last stage, language production (Ellis, 2003). However, in task-supported language teaching, the process is not always fixed, illustrated by the form proposed by Brumfit (1979) with the conversion into production-presentation-practice. Similarly, task-based language teaching is assumed to be a reflection of the strong version of CLT, in which tasks play the central role for the whole language teaching curriculum (Ellis, 2003).

The link between CLT and TBLT is also found in the way they are put into practice in the classroom. The final goal of TBLT is to complete tasks through language use, which somewhat matches with CLT's ultimate purpose of resorting to the target language for maximum information exchange. A generalization of how CLT is implemented has been found in works by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011). When it comes to class configuration, students are often guided to work in small groups with the hope that time allotted for each student to join in communication will increase. Thus, most of the interaction in the class is among students, while the role of the teacher in class seems less dominant. Students are offered a vast number of opportunities for making cooperative interactions and learning the language in a motivating way. Language used and taught in the class is for real-life communication; therefore, language functions are foregrounded over forms, covering all four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) since the learning process starts. Authentic language is incorporated into every lesson so as to familiarize learners with actual communication.

Students' local errors are overlooked to encourage their communication fluency. All these features bear much resemblance to what constitutes Task-Based Language Teaching, making them popular and interchangeably employed in the current classroom.

2.2.1.2 *Sociocultural theory*

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is assumed to be one of the most robust theoretical bases for TBLT to be located in. The common ground has been found between the two notions, which denotes that language learning is involved in "the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication" (Prabhu, 1987, p.1). The connection between the two language teaching concepts later has been further confirmed in studies by researchers as Adjei-Barrett (2013), East (2012), Ellis (2003, 2009), Liddicoat (2008), and Liddicoat & Scarino (2013). Obviously, the key element emphasized by both SCT and TBLT is the magnitude of social interactions created in the classroom in promoting learners' language acquisition and development. Social interaction acts as an impetus for human cognitive development, including language development (Vygotsky, 1978), a conclusion coming as a result of Vygotsky's observations regarding interactions among children and between children and adults.

The interplay between the tenets of SCT and TBLT is reviewed in one study by Tahmasebi and Yamini (2011) with respect to the effects of the two components of SCT—private speech and scaffolding (collaboration)—on students' reading comprehension. The research conducted on the group of 54 Iranian freshmen reveals that, when placed in a task-based framework, private speech and collaboration proved genuinely effective in assisting learners' reading skills. The high level of compatibility

between TBLT and SCL has also been clearly delineated in studies by Nunn (2001) and Ellis (2003).

Central to SCT is the concept of *mediation*, a sophisticated form of human mental activity. The concept of meditation has its origin in the works by Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and Wertsch (1985). Lantolf (2000a) stated that the second language learning process is comprised of self-mediation, other-mediation, and artifacts-mediation. Mediated process in the second language learning, indeed, is a reflection of the relationship between human cognition and the physical world. Lantolf (2000b) states that rather than resort to tools and labor activities, human beings used "symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate relationship with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships" (p.1). The central point of those perceptions is the emphasis on the existence of social interaction, practiced through the use of tools and sign systems, in which language remains the most important. Artigal (1992) describes social interaction as a newly identified space where language acquisition takes place; thus, language acts as a means of mediating interaction and also as an end of such mediated process (Ellis, 2003). The link between TBLT and SCT later has been further pinpointed in one experimental study on a group of EFL freshmen, in terms of reading skill, by Tahmasebi and Yamini (2011). The study came to the conclusion of the contribution of scaffolding and private speech in bettering reading skills among EFL learners.

The central part of SCT, mediation, should be in tune with individual's or group's zone of proximal development (ZDP) to be most effective. Internalization of language is believed to take place during interlocutors' interaction within their zone of proximal development (ZDP) (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Language is believed to be co-

constructed through the interaction between interlocutors. Thus, according to this theory, language acquisition is a reciprocal development, in which interlocutors are in the position of language producer and beneficiary. Learners can better their language performance thanks to the scaffolding offered by their interlocutors. This view of language acquisition process should not be mistaken with Krashen's i+1. Krashen places a high emphasis on the importance of intelligible input, which comes from outside the learner, and ZDP highlights the important role of interlocutors (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). An additional point distinguishing the interactional hypothesis and the sociocultural theory is that advocates of the latter strongly believe in language knowledge being internalized through social activities, specifically daily conversations, while the former underscores the act of providing learners with an adequate amount of input to activate their individual cognitive process (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

2.2.1.3   *Experiential learning*

Experiential learning is assumed to be one of the most influential footings for the birth of TLBT (Nunan, 2004). The essence of this pedagogical approach is "learning by doing", which specifically refers to the act of learner's taking in knowledge through their active and experiential participation in activities. This teaching approach is against the traditional way of passively transmitting knowledge to students, which illuminates the phenomenon of changing from "transmission" approach (Nunan, 2004) to engagement and self-absorption.

Kolb (1984) points out the connection between what a person has known, and how such an amount of knowledge can be deployed, to move beyond the rim of current experiences through the process of reflection and transformation. Learners are expected

to expose themselves to practical cases and to use their current capacity to address the tasks. Their "intellectual growth occurs" when they are "learning by doing" (Nunan, 2004). Students' knowledge is accumulated through their participation in the sequences of tasks. Learners are not in the position of passive receivers. Instead, their traditional role is converted into knowledge explorers and builders.

Nunan (2004) states that the most conspicuous evidence regarding the support of experiential learning theory for TBLT's appearance can be seen in the model created by Kohonen (1992), demonstrated with the following respects:

- Knowledge transformed with learners rather transmitted by teachers to learners

- Collaborative team work encouragement

- Holistic attitude rather than monotonous and hierarchical manner of class working

- Inquiry-motivating and process-assessing rather than product-approached

- Self-directed rather than teacher-directed manner of learning

- Intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.

Particularly, "learner-centeredness and autonomy", key constructs of TBLT, have been highlighted in the view of experiential learning theory by Kohonen (1992). These features come as a clear-cut sign of the link between two pedagogical language teaching approaches. He highlights the outstanding characteristics of experiential learning theory, motivating learners to self-drive their language learning path:

> Experiential learning theory provides the basic philosophical view of learning as part of personal growth. The goal is to enable the learner to become increasingly self-directed and responsible for his or her own learning. This process means a

gradual shift of the initiative to the learner, encouraging him or her to bring in personal contributions and experiences. Instead of the teacher setting the tasks and standards of acceptable performance, the learner is increasingly in charge of his or her own learning. (p. 37)

2.2.1.4   *Interaction, Comprehensible Input, and Comprehensible output hypothesis*

The assumption behind the practice of TBLT is learners' ability to acquire language through meaning negotiation in social interaction settings. This is one of the most remarkable principles of TBLT confirmed by Nunan (2004). Nunan states that TBLT is "an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language" (p. 1). Tasks are claimed to be effective in "encouraging learners to engage in goal-oriented social interaction during which they exchange information and negotiate to achieve its comprehensibility" (Pica, 2012, p. xvi). Thus, learners are expected to be involved in the process of intercommunication, exchange information, and negotiate meaning for mutual understanding, concurrently leading to learners' acquiring language forms (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Interaction plays the central role in helping learners acquire the language. In order to be successful in interaction, it is necessary for interlocutors to modify both input and output. Interaction allows learners to provide each other with comprehensible input and also modify output to make it intelligible.

Hatch (1978), Long (1983, 1996), Pica (1994), Gass (1997), Mackey (1999) and many other researchers have stressed how necessary conversational interaction is to the success of second language acquisition. Where there exists mutual interaction, language development takes place. Ellis and He (1999) affirm that dialogical interaction brings learners much more opportunities to expand their repertoire of lexical knowledge than monologically-constructed learning format. This linguistic phenomenon is brought out by

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the need of making interaction and meaning negotiation. Interlocutors are supposed to modify their speech and make the best use of communication strategies to maintain the conversation. This construct is compatible with the pedagogical belief of TBLT, which highlights the importance of developing learners' language competence by "engaging learners in real language use [and] requiring learners to use the language for themselves" (Willis & Willis, 2012).

Vygotsky (1987) metaphorically describes social planes as precursors for the development of psychological planes. He pointed out that all functions, before being individually internalized, would be available in the social level. Accordingly, language acquisition process will start from interpsychological to intrapsychological, which means that language must be first interactional, and then internalized. This view is then confirmed by Nunn (2001), who stresses that social interaction is prerequisite to human cognitive development, a process from the interpersonal to intrapersonal level. Practically, when speakers frequently engage in the interaction with others, they must produce the understandable language, and try to understand what their interlocutors would like to convey. In order to do that, they may utilize some kinds of language modification techniques such as comprehension checks, clarification checks, self-repetition or paraphrase. Thus, through communicating with other speakers, language learners will pick up and reinforce new language items from the comprehensible language input, and at the same time become more aware of their language knowledge limitations, inspiring them to make more efforts on their journey of language acquisition.

Another prominent hypothesis that has exerted a major influence on the birth of TBLT comes from Krashen (1982). It is the *comprehensible input hypothesis* that comes

from a composite of five hypotheses (the acquisition/learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis), explaining the second language acquisition process. The comprehensible input hypothesis or i+1 indicates that new language delivered to learners should be intelligible to them without discouraging them from understanding it. During their conversations, they need to modify their speech to make it intelligible and keep them involved in the interpersonal communication. Obviously, according to this theory, comprehensible input (i+1) is important for the process of language acquisition. In order to have comprehensible input, it requires modified interaction, which is regarded as the key of language development to interlocutors. Interaction modification is not always related to linguistic simplification. It can be composed of an array of such strategies as body language, a slower rate of speech, and additional explanation. Krashen's belief in the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition is shared by Long (1983).

As to the crucial elements for the success of second language learning, Swain (1985) first introduced the *comprehensible outcome hypothesis*. Indicated in the hypothesis is that in order to communicate successfully, interlocutors need to produce comprehensible language, making them aware of what they need to improve and how they can improve in their second language capacity. Through negotiation meaning, interlocutors are able to create comprehensible input and output, an integral part to insure successful interaction. Particularly, in both speaking and listening, such a communicative strategy is considered to be crucial for the process of comprehension and language acquisition (Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989).

2.2.2   Nature of tasks

A *task* is the central component of TBLT. Task performance and completion

facilitate learners' language acquisition. The following sections elaborate on the concept

of task in TBLT.

2.2.2.1   Definition of tasks

A task is assumed to be the staple of Task-Based Language Teaching

methodology. However, so far there has not been a complete consensus about the

definition of a task in both research and language pedagogy (Crookes, 1986; Ellis, 2003;

Robertson, 2014). It is stated by Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001, p. 11) that

"definitions of task will need to differ according to the purposes for which tasks are

used."

One of the most broad-scoped definitions is generated by Long (1985). He defines

task as:

> a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward.
> Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a
> form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library
> book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weigh a patient, sorting letters, making
> a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping
> someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one
> things people *do* in everyday life, at work, at play and in between. (p. 89)

However, Long's definition has been considered "non-technical and non-linguistic" by

Nunan (2004, p. 2) in light of three elements including the comprehensive description of

a task performance, task clarification, and task sequence. It can be seen that Long

seemingly fails to elaborate on the nature of a task, what elements are involved in the

task, and what is a comprehensive process of the task. His definition lists everyday tasks

rather than delineating tasks from any specific perspective. Tasks mentioned in Long's

definition can generate either linguistic or non-linguistic outcomes; however, among those tasks, some are not involved in language use such as painting a fence. Moreover, there exists an overlapping among the listed tasks in his definition; for example, the task of weighing a patient can be part of the larger task of giving a medical examination (Nunan, 2004).

When it comes to language teaching, a task should be treated from the pedagogical perspective with the involvement of language use (Ellis, 2003). This stance has been approved of by many other prominent linguists and pedagogic practitioners such as Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985), Breen (1987, 1989), Bygate (1999), Nunan (1989, 2004). An additional remarkable linguistic feature considered by many researchers regarding task performance is whether task should guide its users to the primary function of meaning conveyance, or demonstrating the linguistic knowledge (Ellis, 2003). The former view, which reflects the meaning-focused manner, has been popularly advocated by Long (1985), Richards, Platt, and Weber (1986), Nunam (1989), and Skehan (1996).

Obviously, there exist a number of definitions of *task*, which are based on different perspectives of a task including scope, perspective of task-viewing, authenticity, required linguistic skills, involved psychological processes, and outcome. Multiple definitions of task reflect its diversity and plasticity. Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) argue that the purposes, in which a task is used, will somewhat lead to what the task is defined. Cited in Table 3 are some common definitions of tasks throughout the history of task-based language teaching research.

Table 3. Variety of *task* definitions

1.	**Breen (1987)**

Any structured language learning endeavor which has particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. "Task" is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning-- from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such a group problem-solving or simulations and decision making. (p. 23)

2.	**Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001)**

An activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective, and which is chosen so that it is most likely to provide information for learners which will help them evaluate their own learning. (p. 11)

3.	**Crookes (1986)**

A piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, or at work. (p. 1)

4.	**Ellis (2003)**

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, a direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. (p.16)

5.	**Leaver and Kaplan (2004)**
	A task is "an activity conducted in the foreign language that results in a product with a measurable result such that students can determine for themselves whether or not they have adequately competed the assignment". (p. 47)
6.	**Nunan (2004)**
	A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end. (p.4)
7.	**Prabhu (1987)**
	An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a task. (p.24)
8.	**Richards, Platt, and Weber (1986)**
	A task is "an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Task may or may not involve the production of a language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative ...since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of a language for its own sake." (p. 289)

9.	**Samuda & Bygate (2008)**
	A task is "a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non- linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both." (p. 69)
10.	**Skehan (1996)**
	A task is "an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome." (p.38)
11.	**Willis (1996)**
	A task is "a goal-orientated activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome. In other words, learners use whatever target language resources they have in order to solve a problem, do a puzzle, play a game or share and compare experiences." (p. 53)
12.	**Carroll (1993)**
	A task is "any activity in which a person engages, given an appropriate setting, in order to achieve a specifiable class of objectives." (p. 8)

According to Nunan (2004), although there is a variety in the task definition, the central point as to pedagogical tasks is the involvement of communicative language use with the emphasis on meaning over form.

2.2.2.2   Attributes of TBLT

TBLT is featured with particular attributes distinguishing from the traditional language teaching approaches. The following sections aim to provide a clear view of what TBLT is.

Primary focus on meaning

The most remarkable feature embedded with TBLT is its primary focus on meaning. This view of TBLT has been accepted by many pedagogical language teaching

researchers such as Long (1985), Richards, Platt, and Weber (1986), Nunan (1989, 2004), and Skehan (1996). This characteristic of TBLT has its origin in the previous language teaching theories. Interaction for the ultimate purpose of successful meaning conveyance is the central part of those theories, which consequently leads TBLT to the meaning-focused manner. This view can be demonstrated with Willis's (1996) stress on the importance of the *task component* as a tool to promote learners' speech fluency and communication strategies.

However, the construct of *meaning-focused* in TBLT should be perceived properly by language teaching practitioners and researchers. It is not simply the meaning of words in terms of semantics; instead, tasks are used to involve learners in using language pragmatically (Ellis, 2003). In other words, the focal point in the lesson design following this learning method is to create a chance for learners to use language items authentically to deal with daily tasks in a life-simulating context, rather than testing how much knowledge of the target language learners have in their mind. Thus, the end of the process is the accomplishment of the intended task, in which language serves as one of the tools to help learners in their performance. Language utilized in the process, evidently, has been contextualized meaningfully, reflecting upon the nature of intercommunication.

Through communicating to transmit information for the purpose of task completion, learners' target language proficiency will improve (Ellis, 2003). In order to involve learners in using language to fulfill the task, some particular strategies are supposed to be applied, including the gap principle, reaching a decision or solution, cognition processes (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Among these, the *gap* principle is believed

to be applied earliest in the classroom. This practice is based on the assumption that when one learner needs the information held by the other to complete tasks, communicative interaction for information exchange will take place. In this case, meaning transmission is what learners focus on, and it is completed throughout the use of language. The *gap* concept has been further classified by Prabhu (1987) into three main types, comprised of information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap. Similarly, in the principle of reaching a decision or solution and cognition processes, learners employ language as a means to either transmit their thought to reach the final conclusion or process the task through sequences until it is finished.

In research related to the value of debate task in the foreign language classroom, language has been described as a vehicle for learners to communicate their ideas meaningfully rather than as an object of study with decontextualized functions (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010; van Lier, 2005; Long, 2007; Stryker and Leaver, 1997; MLA Ad Hoc Committee, 2007; Shaw, 1997; Hedegaard, 2005; Brown, 2009; Swain, 1993; Swan, 2005). In a nutshell, provided that meaning has gotten across, tasks are likely to be accomplished. This quality of Task-Based Language Teaching entails the development of language use competence as its natural sequence, since task participants "are not simply displaying their control of particular patterns or structures or phrases, which would be a linguistic objective" (Willis, 2004, p. 13).

Opportunities for 'focus on form'

Putting top priority on meaning does not entail that form is completely disregarded. This must be one of the most particular qualities of the approach as "a task stops being communicative only if the choice of activity has been prompted by purely

linguistic considerations" (Stern, 1992, p. 202). In 1991, Long made a distinction between two approaches of language teaching, *focus on forms* and *focus on form* (p. 45-46). Though the trend of application in two teaching methodology concepts is not the same, Ellis (2015) suggests that they should be treated as "complementary rather than oppositional approaches to teaching" (p. 1). *Focus on forms* is the central part of a synthetic syllabus, which can be illustrated with the case of a traditional structure-based syllabus; meanwhile, *focus on form* has arisen as a pedagogical orientation in communicative language teaching classrooms.

In terms of the strand of *focus on form*, learners are given opportunities to learn and practice how to communicate meaning to reach their goal, and concurrently internalizing language form to make their language competence more accomplished. Linguistic components emerge incidentally in the lesson, attracting learners' attention naturalistically, when the focal point is still intended for meaning and communication (Long and Robinson, 1998; Swan, 2005; East, 2015). As stated by Ellis (2003) and Carless (2007), while learners are required to perform a task in the primary role of language user, and mainly attend to communicating their ideas, task has space for them to peripherally pay attention to language form; this orthodoxy can become feasible with the use of communicative tasks. This language acquisition frame originates from the belief that meaning and form are closely intertwined; the existence of grammar is compared with the base for language users to communicate meaning effectively (Nunan, 2006). The important role of grammatical knowledge in meaning conveyance has been admitted by many researchers such as Halliday (1994) and Hammond and Derewianka (2001).

Noticeably, learners' awareness of language form is an incidental activity during their task performance. It means the roles of language users and language learners simultaneously exist inside learners. Learners can momentarily shift their focal attention to form and vice versa, based on their immediate needs in the case (Ellis, 2003). This represents the incident of students' picking up language in a natural way and in an active manner. They are the agents to manipulate their process of language acquisition in terms of both language knowledge and language competence.

Though tasks do not prescribe a body of certain linguistic forms learners have to use, they do offer its learners linguistic options by narrowing down the scale of linguistic items, offering "certain semantic space" and involving "certain cognitive processes" (Ellis, 2003, p. 9-10). Accordingly, language forms selection, which is needed to conduct tasks, belongs to learners, making them more responsible for their own language production and autonomous in language processing. This assumption has been confirmed by Kumaravadivelu (1991), who underscores that tasks function to circumscribe the content; however, "the actual language to be negotiated in the classroom is left to the teacher and the learner" (p. 99).

Unfocused and focused tasks are two categories representing the form-facilitating feature of task (Ellis 2003). Regarding the former, learners have opportunities to decide what kinds of linguistic features they would like to use; they are not pre-set in their mind. Consequently, learners will find more freedom to manipulate their language in task implementation. Meanwhile, the latter aims at predisposing learners to put particular language items into practice contextually for task completion. This focused task can be clearly distinguished from the unfocused one in light of the extent to which form is

intentionally focused. Focused tasks may be used to help teachers, or any practitioner in the field, know whether or not learners are able to use the target language features correctly in communicative contexts.

Ellis (2003) suggests two ways of designing a focused task, including a grammatical task (Loschky and Bley-Vroman, 1993) and consciousness raising (CR) task (Fotos and Ellis, 1991). The distinction between these two types of focused task lies on how the particular language feature is incorporated into tasks to make learners themselves internalize it. The *grammatical task* proves to be more controlled in terms of directing students to the target language form. Such a task necessitates learners using some specific language features if they would like to fulfill the task. Thus, it is unlikely that learners will deviate from the *workplan* (Ellis, 2003). Although similar to *grammatical task* with reference to drawing learners' attention to language form, *consciousness raising* (CR) *tasks* treats language as the content of a task. This approach calls for learners' discussing and negotiating meaning to figure out the target language form.

It is important to make a distinction between two concepts of *focus on form* and *focus on* forms, as these methodological interferences help to differentiate and characterize different stages of a task. *Forms* and *form* stand for completely different approaches, indicating how specific language features are dealt with in the classroom. *Focus on form* indicates the act of drawing "students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus in on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 45-46). *Focus on forms* refers to "traditional teaching of discrete points of grammar in separate lessons" (Sheen, 2002, p. 303). However, DeKeyer (1998) airs out a completely different view of these concepts. He views *focus*

on forms as a sub-component of *focus on form*, for the belief that any approach related to grammatical features should belong to *focus on form*.

Two mentioned concepts adhere themselves to different stages of task-based lessons, which are recommended to include three phases, including pre-task, during-task, and post-task; during-task is necessary for the validity of task-based teaching (Ellis, 2006). The phases of pre- and post-task, which involve preparatory activities learners can take before starting the task and following-up activities, respectively, are optional to task lesson designers. *Focus on forms* are intended to take place in either pre-task or post-task (Long, 1991; Carless, 2007), providing learners with some scaffolding and corrective feedback on forms incorrectly used by learners in during-task phase, or "useful", "natural forms" (Loshcky and Bley-Vroman, 1993). *Focus on forms* is conducted to help learners reconstruct accuracy they sacrifice for fluency in during-task stage (Skehan, 1996).

Focus on forms, according to Long (2000), is a teacher-led way of introducing linguistic items explicitly and systematically. *Focus on forms* is closely tied to the stage of *present* in the lesson design structure (PPP) of a *weak* version of CLT, in which "the essentially communicative purpose of learning the FL was acknowledged" and "grammar was taught in an explicit, teacher-led, systematic way" (East, 2015, p. 8). As for the *strong* version of CLT (East, 2015, p. 7), there is an obvious absence of attention to linguistic forms due to its basis on the language acquisition proposed by Krashen (1981, 1982). Krashen's hypothesis contends that all a language learner needs to maximize his/her language competence development is the optimal amount of time for meaningful target language learning activities, and language consumption is "best learned incidentally and implicitly" (Long, 2000, p. 183). However, East (2015) argues that

communication could not be considered proficient if a learner's language use is far from appropriate forms, even when the message has gotten across. TBLT is able to make up for the shortcomings of both versions of CLT. It leaves space for grammar to be noticed, but at the same time does not make it the center of the lesson. The center of the lesson is still around the meaning conveyance.

Learners' flexibility in utilizing available resources to accomplish tasks

Learners are expected to make use of any resources, which are either linguistic or non-linguistic, to complete the task (Ellis, 2009, p. 223). It is not a template of language knowledge performance that has been pre-determined or scripted; vice versa, learners are instructed to achieve the set goal by themselves with their use of mixed capacity. This tenet of Task-Based Language Teaching comes up as a consequence of its primary focus on meaning and incidental attention to form. When meaning is placed at the top priority, learners are expected to make use of any available sources to communicate the meaning across without being subject to the limitation of scripted linguistic forms. As stated by Ellis (2003), the *workplan* does not particularize certain language items learners have to use for task performance; they are offered an opportunity to be autonomous in deciding what sources of language they can use to impart meanings.

The TBLT framework put forward by Willis (1996) encompasses three components of pre-task, task cycle (task performing, planning, and report), and language focus. Taking task cycle into consideration, he states that it brings learners the opportunity to make use of their repository of accumulated language knowledge to conduct the task. Learners are allowed to play around with the language they know as long as they are able to reach the end of the task with the achievement of the outcome.

This doubtlessly helps learners bolster their competence of using language spontaneously and conversationally, which is the true nature of daily communication.

In one study about the role of teachers and learners in task-based language teaching classroom, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2011) identify learners as both "receivers and main agents" (p. 49). They stress that through their participating in task, learners will be motivated to best use their communicative capacities accumulated throughout their first language (L1) for the target language competence development. In other words, task predisposes learners to activate their capacities to resolve what emerges during the target language learning process (Lin, 2009).

This characteristic of TBLT is also assumed to result from the phenomenon of peer-interaction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Thanks to their opportunities to interact, discuss, and negotiate with each other, learners find more at ease to communicate their ideas. This perspective matches with the affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985), in which learners are believed to better develop their language acquisition when they are less clouded with anxiety and negative attitudes. Willis & Willis (2007) pointed out that learners are more likely and willing to promote their target language competence in task-based language teaching environment, as learners are not subject to penalties in case they make mistakes. This anxiety-free classroom environment will consequently encourage learners to take risks in making the best use of their repertoire of language knowledge, and any applicable offering, to achieve the set goal of the task.

However, it does not mean that in Task-Based Language Teaching, learners are not provided with any scaffolding at all. Access to the input data is optional in task designing (Ellis, 2006). For example, learners can use either available pictures or texts to

support their information transmission process. In this sense, the active role of learners is emphasized in terms of choosing means for successful meaning transmission.

Situational and/or interactional authenticity

Task is designed to facilitate learners' communication competence in real life. In other words, learners are able to put what they have acquired in the class into play for their communicative needs and survival. Language in the class should be authentic, which enables learners to use it in reality. *Situational authenticity* in Task-Based Language Teaching refers to whether or not a task instructs simulation of what takes place in real life (Ellis, 2003; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). When it comes to task in TBLT, Long (2014) believes a task is basically a real-world activity. This kind of task can be demonstrated with daily activities such as reserving a place at a restaurant, choosing a place for a trip, and check-in at the airport. There must be a compatible connection between what learners conduct in the classroom and what they are expected to perform in their daily life. Authenticity in the classroom also becomes a momentum for learners to boost their learning when they acknowledge the benefits of their devotion to classroom performance. Task predisposes learners to internalize linguistic items naturally and to figure out what problems they may face during communication (Lin, 2009). In EFL context, Task-Based Language Teaching emerges as an innovative approach to bridge the gap between in-class and real-life language (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2006; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011).

Communication is another factor centering around the approach of Task-Based Language Teaching. Communication entails the needs and demands of interaction. Communication is not always linear; it involves interaction for meaning clarification and

negotiation among interlocutors to finalize the success of information exchange process. Task should touch upon the *interactional authenticity* (Ellis, 2003), which deals with communicative strategies that learners are able to use for keeping a conversation going on and meaning transmitted (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). This category of task is labeled a *pedagogic* task (Bygate, 2016), the task specifically designed for inside-classroom practice to illuminate "typical features of normal target language use" (p. 381). Ellis (2003) gives some specific examples for this kind of task such as telling a story using provided pictures, retelling a story for others to draw it out, identifying two different pictures, and locating a building on a map. It is discernible that these activities hardly occur outside the classroom; however, what learners are expected to uptake on partaking in those tasks is nurturing their efficacious communicative behavior to deal with potential problems when they perform real-life tasks. Germane to the effects of task application in language teaching, Richards & Rogers (2001) make a reference to learners' enhancement of prediction based on linguistic and contextual clues, clarification asking, and consulting with peers.

Clearly-defined outcome other than the use of language

According to Ellis (2009), language should be treated as the means for learners to achieve the outcome, not the intended end of the process. Learners are expected to make use of available sources to arrive at a clear outcome; thus, the accomplishment of the task is reflected through content (Ellis, 2003), which is called "a specified objective" by Crookes (1986, p. 1). To be more specific, the outcome is a reflection of whether or not task has been completed (Ellis, 2003). The result of the activity should be "considered and reviewed" by students and teacher (Bygate, 2015, p. 386). He specifies the expected

outcome of task with a list of products possibly including "a picture, a diagram, a construction or mode, a chart, an array of some kind, a list, a set of priorities, a verbal summary, a proposal, a recommendation, a judgment, a decision" (p. 386).

It is widely accepted that the end of task completion is *product outcomes*. The outcome is supposed to be identifiable and specifiable enough for assessment (Wright, 1987; Nunan, 1989). Noticably, Ellis (2003) underpins the importance to incorporate so-called *predicted outcomes* or *process outcomes* into the descriptive framework of tasks. Based on what he explains, the process which learners experience to reach the outcome is not always straightforward; thus, it is crucial for practitioners of task in the classroom to identify "what language and cognitive processes are likely to occur when input, conditions, and procedures are systematically varied" (p. 20). Another remarkable identity of task outcome presented by Ellis (2003) is that it can be either "open" or "close", depending on specific tasks. This belief is exemplified with "spot the difference" and problem-solving tasks. It can be clearly seen that for the first task, there must be one correct response; meanwhile, the second can raise various possibilities from task participants.

Learners should be well-informed of why they conduct the task; when they know what is waiting for them at the end of the road, learners are likely to be more orientated with their task performance process (Ellis, 2006). Task-based language teaching class provides learners with "a purpose for classroom activity which goes beyond practice of language for its own sake" (Richards, Platt, and Weber, 1986). The belief is shared by Leaver & Willis (2004) in one of their studies about task-based instruction. The purpose of task deployment is not simply limited to encouraging learners to present their language

knowledge. Task facilitates learners' use of language as a vehicle to achieve specific

goals. Language is treated "primarily as a tool for communicating rather than as an object

for study or manipulation" (Ellis, 2003). The finalized focus of evaluation should lie on

outcomes achieved by learners' utilization of the target language and probable abilities.

From Ellis's point of view (2003), it is important to make a distinction between

two concepts of *outcome* and *aim* in a task. The former speaks about a particular result

that learners are able to reach at the end of the task performance; differently, the latter

refers to the pedagogic purpose of the task, the act of promoting learners' language use

competence for meaning conveyance. However, there is a possibility that the outcome is

attained and the aim is missed. This unintended workplan transpires when learners tend to

resort to other available strategies, aiming at making the task done, rather than making

efforts to utilize the target language. It is underscored by Ellis (2003) that it is "cognitive

and linguistic processes involved in reaching the outcome" (p. 8) that must be the staple

of lesson practice. In spite of the fact that learners may have the task done, and the

outcome comes up, the task is not considered effective unless the target language is used

as a tool for task completion.

Outcome and language are inseparable parts of task design. The co-existence of

those two elements validates the effectiveness of a task as a workplan, meaningfully and

authentically. This assumption makes a great deal of sense as for task assessment.

Though it is perceived that "the assessment of task performance is in terms of task

outcome" (Skehan, 1996), it is worth reminding learners that how language is used to

make such an outcome obtained does greatly matter.

2.2.2.3 What distinguish tasks from exercises in language class

Task, in reality, intended to encourage learners to use the target language as a part of language production can easily and inadvertently become an exercise, which is likely to make learners focus on forms and limit their language choice freedom (Ellis, 2003). Though TBLT places the priority on meaning, it does not mean that form is ignored. In contrast, meaning and form in TBLT are highly interrelated. The existence of grammatical knowledge is utilized to boost the productivity of communication and task achievement (Nunan, 2004). Nevertheless, there must be a clear distinction between two concepts of tasks and grammatical exercises (Willis and Willis, 2001). They specify that in order to accomplish the task, learners are not designated with a certain range of language structures for use; instead, they have their own freedom to decide their language use within instructed contexts. Differently, exercise is often designed to circumscribe a certain range of language items for learners to use. Thus, though both task and exercise share the common feature of promoting learners' language competence, it is a must to bring out the difference between them; task places more emphasis on "meaning-focused language use", which is different from exercise that pays the utmost attention to form (Ellis, 2003).

However, Ellis' view into the different nature of task and exercise is challenged by Widdowson's (1998) argument that both task and exercise involve learner' attention to meaning and form simultaneously. He explains that it is necessary for learners to use particular linguistic forms to deal with certain kinds of tasks, and vice versa, in order to complete an exercise, learners need to understand the meaning of language items included in the exercise. Thus, form and meaning could not be completely disconnected

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in either task or exercise performance. They must come together for learners to achieve their workplan. Widdowson (1998) suggests that it is not form or meaning that matters in terms of the distinction between task and exercise, but it is the kind of meaning involved. He attaches two layers of meaning, "pragmatic meaning" and "semantic meaning", to task and exercise, respectively, to illuminate the difference. As far as what he believes, meaning associated with task is the meaning of language used in contexts. In contrast, meaning indicated in exercise is decontextualized, which corresponds with language far from the authentic use. In response to Widdowson's proposal, Ellis (2003) supposes that such a distinction is in line with the identified features of "meaning-focused" found in task and "form-focused" found in exercise.

Given how to distinguish task from exercise, a throwback to one of five hypotheses as for language acquisition proposed by Krashen would be useful. Accordingly, task participation is a process of language acquisition, and exercise performance is a process of language learning. Krashen states in the acquisition/ learning hypothesis that if being exposed to adequate samples of the target language, learners can acquire their second language as easy as their first language, which is unconscious learning. Conversely, what takes place in a formal classroom and is involved in conscious attention to focus on forms and language rules is called learning. This view of how language is processed by learners relates itself to the role of learners. Task participants are defined as "language users" as they are supposed to maximally focus on form to get the meaning across, simulating how they manage to process language communicatively in real-life contexts (Ellis, 2003). Thus, learners in task-based language class tend to produce language for communication incidentally and spontaneously in an instructed

learning setting. Coming from the opposite direction, exercise implementation

participants are named as *learners* for their initial intention of acquiring specific forms of

language. Widdowson (1998) further specifies that what markedly distinguishes task

from exercise is that through carrying out task as a communicative activity, linguistic

competence is expected to concurrently develop; meanwhile, exercise is treated as a

preparatory phase, equipping learners' linguistic knowledge before their participation in

real communication.

Nevertheless, as being reviewed above, tasks do not focus on meaning alone, they

have room for form attention. And learners, on carrying out a task, are not always stable

in the role of language users; they tend to switch to the role of language learners for their

immediate needs. Thus, in tasks, there is a co-existence of language user and learner, and

it depends on learners to act plastically.

2.2.3   TBLT in foreign language education

Van den Branden, Bygate, and Norris (2009) highlighted the important role of

tasks in language teaching, especially in the foreign language teaching context as follows:

> [T]here is widespread agreement that tasks, potentially at least, offer a
> uniquely powerful resource both for teaching and testing of language. In
> particular, they provide a locus for bringing together the various dimensions of
> language, social context, and the mental processes of individual learners that are
> key to learning. There are theoretical grounds, and empirical evidence, for
> believing that tasks might be able to offer all the affordances needed for
> successful instructed language development, whoever the learners might be, and
> whatever the context. (p. 11)

This method aims at promoting students' communicativeness by engaging them in

tasks that are closely attached to daily needs (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011; Van

den Branden, 2006; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The main performers of most activities

in the class are still students, and the teacher is considered the task facilitator and prompter. Students will go through different steps to finish the task. This teaching method involves students' strong mutual support to accomplish the given task. And students themselves feel motivated as they are doing meaningful things to prepare themselves for the real world, focusing on integrating cultural aspects into the lesson. The utmost expectation for learners is their competence of language use in a meaningful way. I see how effective this method of teaching is to learners in reality, especially in the era of learning English as a second language for the actual application, not only for the standard tests. Therefore, one major part of my teaching curriculum is Project Work, aka project-based teaching, stemming from the task-based approach. They are assigned a semester project with a final product related to different topics in life, e.g. how to protect their living environment or how to improve reading culture for people around them. Students all seem dedicated to fulfilling the given tasks, and at the same time promoting their language capacity remarkably.

2.3   Vocabulary Instruction

2.3.1   Vocabulary

It is impossible for a language system to exist without vocabulary. When it comes to learning a new language, vocabulary knowledge could not be disregarded as "lexis is the core or heart of language" (Lewis, 1993, p. 89). Vocabulary knowledge also presents its significance in almost all of language proficiency assessment rubrics. Thus, it is necessary to have a conclusive definition of vocabulary. Definitions of vocabulary are diverse because they are viewed from different perspectives. Some may define

vocabulary as a linguistic item symbolizing meanings, or vocabulary can be simply a list of words carrying meanings. Among the pool of vocabulary definitions, the generalization by Nation (1990) appears to be quite inclusive, covering all aspects of vocabulary itself and its connections with contexts in which it is used. He specifies that in order to know a word, eight components of a word including meaning, written form, spoken form, grammatical behavior, collocations of the word, register, associations of the word, and the word's frequency need to be taken into account.

It is axiomatic that vocabulary is the building block of any language system, upon which communication is built and developed. It plays a paramount role in helping learners acquire a language comprehensively (Cameron, 2001; Harmon, Wood and Keser, 2009; Linse, 2005) and critical for learners to produce complete spoken and written texts (Nation, 1999; Maximo, 2000; Read, 2000; Gu, 2003; Marion, 2008, and Nation, 2011). Possessing an adequate amount of lexical knowledge enables language users to communicate meanings across more effectively, and at the same time gain a better understanding of the world (Nandy, 1994). The case of toddlers or beginning second language learners is a typical demonstration of how powerful vocabulary is in communication. Even though both groups of the mentioned language users have yet to master grammar, they still are able to convey meaning successfully to some extent. Vocabulary knowledge is highly undermined by both first-language and second-language researchers in terms of language competence assessment (Grabe, 1991; Frederiksen, 1982). Due to the stressed importance of vocabulary, it is highly important to help language learners build up their repertoire of vocabulary in a systematic and effective way.

In the second language teaching, vocabulary repertoire enrichment plays a central role in determining learners' language learning success. More attention is being placed on helping EFL learners promote vocabulary knowledge (Rodriguez & Sadoski, 2000). Assumedly, a severe lack of lexical items will fail language users in communicating their ideas. Lexical knowledge has been considered to be "central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" (Schmitt, 2000, p. 55). Learners' lexical knowledge enables them to be involved in spoken and written text formation (Nation, 2001; Rodriguez and Sadowki, 2000; Read, 2000; Gu, 2003). Vocabulary learning is supposedly critical of all four macro-skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing in language learning in general, and in the field of learning English as a second or foreign language in particular (Nation, 2011). For the fact that "vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write" (Richard & Renandya, 2002), vocabulary repertoire enrichment plays a key role in helping learners develop their communicative competence. Without vocabulary capital, structures or any language functions hardly come into effect, and learners' language competence development may be hindered (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

The role of vocabulary to learners' language function can be likened to the fun fact that an engine could not start without the availability of fuels, in which lexical items play the role of fuel to activate one's language system. The assumption about the power of vocabulary to the process of language competence development is completely true to learners of English as a foreign language. The premise has also been illustrated in the study by Huckin, Haynes, and Coady (1993), which firmly stresses the prime importance

vocabulary holds to second language readers; without vocabulary knowledge, readers are more likely to suffer failure in their reading skill development.

However, lexical knowledge should be treated as an independent component of language skills as reading or speaking (Nation and Waring, 1997). The two prominent linguists stress that it is wrong to consider vocabulary knowledge a "prerequisite to the performance of language skills". This can be reasoned by Nation's hypothesis (1993, 2001) that vocabulary knowledge and language use bear a complementary relationship, in which the more lexical knowledge learners acquire, the better their language use competence becomes, and vice versa. There is no doubt that the existence of the reciprocal effect between two linguistic areas generates the progression in language study.

When it comes to vocabulary teaching, it is commonly believed that "learning a word means learning its meaning" (Brown, 2010). Such a vocabulary teaching approach is the origin of the fact that vocabulary is generally taught without adequate cultural and communicative contexts. This scenario of vocabulary teaching practice majorly accounts for learners' failure to communicate, even at the basic level, even when learners possess a considerable number of words. To address the issue, different aspects of vocabulary need to be taken into consideration, ensuring that learners "truly know a word", not just learn a word (Brown, 2010). The concept of knowing a word to EFL learners proposed by Nation (2001) is comprised of nine different components, which are categorized into three groups of form, meaning, and language use. Accordingly, so that EFL learners are able to use lexical items appropriately, all of the above-mentioned aspects of vocabulary

should be addressed. Yet, in reality, "much of what has passed for vocabulary

teaching…addresses only the tip of the lexical iceberg" (Singleton, 1999, p. 272).

Table 4. Aspects of vocabulary knowledge

Form	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	Word parts	R	What parts are recognizable in this word?
		P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning	Form and meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
		P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	Concept and referents	R	What is included in this concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	Grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	Constraints on use (register, frequency…)	R	Where, when, and how often would we expect to meet this word?
		P	Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Note: R = receptive knowledge; P = productive knowledge
Source: Nation, 2001, p. 27

It is evident that the traditional teaching methods only allow learners to access

certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge. Learners' vocabulary development should not

be limited to learning only. Instead, learners should be provided with the exposure to vocabulary in order to acquire it. In other words, the combination of "intentional learning and incidental learning through exposure to input" (p. 85) will yield most fruits for learners (Brown, 2011).

2.3.2   A review of vocabulary instruction approaches

Similar to those picking up a language as their first language, EFL learners need to acquire an adequate number of words to be able to activate the target language system. Vocabulary is considered the core part of one's communication ability. Without the availability of required lexical items, learners' knowledge of grammatical structures and language functions will be inert. The combination of vocabulary with grammatical structures and language functions allows learners to communicate meanings. However, compared to first language learners, foreign language learners encounter more challenges to accumulate the desired number of lexical items, enabling them to communicate effectively.

Francis and Kucera (1982) posit the hypothesis that knowing 2,000 most frequently used words may allow learners to obtain the meaning of nearly 80 percent of vocabulary body in average texts. The magnitude of high-frequency vocabulary is even recorded to be much ampler in spoken language, illustrated with the statistics by McCarthy (2004) and O'Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007) that over 80 percent of the spoken corpus is made up of 1,800 most repeated words. Thus, the acquisition of an appropriate number of words allows language learners to run their communication smoothly. Yet, in order to achieve the target, EFL learners have to overcome myriad difficulties. Challenges basically originate from learners' foreign language learning

conditions. Foreign language learners do not have an intense exposure to language sources as they do with their first language. EFL learners mainly pick up their vocabulary in the classroom environment, which restricts the diversity and accuracy of language exposure.

As stated by Schmitt (2010), "vocabulary learning is an incremental process" (p. 19), which necessitates that learners interact with the target language in a systematic and frequent manner. The common path for all aspects of vocabulary to be acquired is from zero to "partial to precise" (Henriksen, 1999, p. 303). The process of the target language acquisition should be considered a continuum, not absolutes. Learners need to take up several steps to digest the target language before they make it into their linguistic capital. The first encounter with words should be context-based and followed by an adequate number of meaningful practice. Meaningful activities "encourage learners to use newly learned vocabulary in a productive manner" (VanPatten and Lee, 2003, p. 179). In this way, vocabulary knowledge is most likely to become language learners' long-term and retrievable memory.

Similar to teaching any other aspect of language, vocabulary instruction must go through three main phases of task-based approach, including pre-task, during-task, and post-task. Learners start with encountering new lexical items, understanding them, and activating their linguistic knowledge in task-based contexts. Teaching vocabulary through task-based approach is a sequential process, which is featured with four fundamental characteristics including focus on meaning, real-world connection, task completion as the priority, and task performance based on task outcome (Nunan, 1989).

After reviewing 144 studies regarding vocabulary instruction for both first and second language learners, Krashen (1989) confirms that incidental vocabulary learning is more effective than intentional instruction. Incidental vocabulary learning refers to the case of learning vocabulary unconsciously when learners are paying attention to accomplishing another task (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). Learners do not have to force themselves to memorize lexical items. Instead, lexical items are likely to be retained through learners' interaction with them in naturalistic conditions. Incidental learning is considered effective in helping language learners pick up vocabulary (Amad, 2011; Day, Omura, & Hiramatsu, 1991; Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985; Saragi, Nation, & Meister, 1978). In the study on the effectiveness of incidental vocabulary learning to Saudi ESL learners, Ahmad (2011) concludes that learners instructed with incidental vocabulary learning outperform those with intentional style in terms of vocabulary understanding, retaining, and using. When learners expose themselves to the new words in spoken or written contexts, vocabulary acquisition will most likely take place (Paribakht & Weshche, 1999).

Learning vocabulary in contexts involves learners' high rate of the cognitive process. Leaners need to utilize all their sources of knowledge to decipher the meaning of words based on contexts, which entails learners' better understanding of "grammatical patterns, common lexical sets, and typical association of the word" (Amad, 2011, p. 68). In contrast, intentional learning shifts learners' attention right away to lexical items without contexts (Schmitt, 2000). The most common method for intentional vocabulary learning process is grammar-translation. Here, the meaning of words is presented to learners in a decontextualized manner, reducing learners' ability to put what they have

learned into practice correctly. As Krashen (1987) put it, when talking about the drawbacks of the grammar-translation method in language teaching, "It can be claimed that grammar translation provides scraps of comprehensible input. The focus is entirely on the form, and not on meaning … students are forced to read word by word, and consequently rarely focus completely on the message" (p. 128).

However, Chall (1987) states that learners' language proficiency and age are determinants of whether incidental or intentional approach should be used in teaching vocabulary. Meanwhile, Coady (1993) advocates the use of both approaches. She specifies that the set of basic or core vocabulary should be taught explicitly while the set of more complicated words should be introduced via naturalistic settings. Carter and McCarthy (1988) also recommend the flexible use of two approaches in vocabulary teaching. They stress that both context-based and direct vocabulary instructions have their own weaknesses and strengths; therefore, the mixture of both will bring the best outcome.

Practical vocabulary teaching should be based upon well-established vocabulary instruction principles. Four assumptions about vocabulary teaching were brought up by Beck and Mckeown (1991). Specifically, direct vocabulary teaching would promote reading comprehension if the reading text contains the words which have been taught in advance; vocabulary instruction should be an extensive design, allowing learners to have multiple encounters with lexical items which are needed for their comprehension; vocabulary association is an integral part of vocabulary teaching design; and finally vocabulary instruction would yield the best outcome when lexical items in a lesson are meaningfully related. The National Reading Panel (2000), based on their research on

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vocabulary teaching methods used in the first language teaching classrooms, came up

with a list of suggested strategies for teaching vocabulary as follows.

1. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.

2. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.

3. Learning in rich context is valuable for vocabulary learning.

4. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured when necessary.

5. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning task.

6. Computer technology can be used to help teach vocabulary.

7. Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning.

8. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on
    instruction.

9. Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal
    learning.

Barcroft (2004) introduced the five following principles of effective vocabulary

instruction in the EFL classrooms, which focus on the importance of lexical input:

1. present new words frequently and repeatedly in the input

2. use meaning-bearing comprehensible input when presenting new words

3. limit forced output during the early stages of learning new words

4. limit forced semantic elaboration during the initial stages of learning new words

5. progress from less demanding to more demanding vocabulary-related activities.

2.3.3   Prospects of TBLT application in vocabulary instruction

A vast body of research investigating the effects of TBLT application in EFL classrooms contributes to strengthening the belief in the use of this language teaching method as a potential way to upgrade the quality of language teaching and learning for the current contexts. TBLT has been found to be effective in promoting EFL learners' four macro skills. Specifically, thanks to applying Task-Based Language Teaching, learners' listening ability can be dramatically improved (Maghsoudi & Golshan, 2017; Bahrami, 2010; Nasirian, 2012; Badri, Nazari, & Badri, 2014; Khoshsima & Sadeghi Tasuj, 2014; Zareinajad, Rezaei, & Shokrpour, 2015; Zhang, 2017). The positive outcome is also reported when TBLT is incorporated into lesson designs (Tilfarlioglu & Basaran, 2007; Setayesh & Marzban, 2017; Golchin & Kheirabadi, 2013; Kolaei, Yarahmadi, & Maghsoudi, 2013; Shabani & Ghasemi, 2014; Chalak, 2015). In terms of the impacts of TBLT on writing skill development, the findings of a large quantity of studies are clear evidence for the potential of using this teaching method to enhance learners' ability to write in the target language (Ahmed & Bidin, 2016; Marashi & Dadari, 2012; Rezaei, 2014; Khodabakhshizadeh & Mousavi, 2012; Rahimpour and Safari, 2011; Ghavamnia, Tavakoli, & Esteki, 2013). When it comes to teaching speaking skill in EFL classrooms, TBLT serves as a powerful pedagogical method to help learners promote their oral skill (Albino, 2017; Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016).

In spite of receiving attention later than other components of language, over the past decades, vocabulary has been a fertile land for numerous researchers. A large number of studies were conducted to gain an insight into how important vocabulary is to the development of EFL learners' language proficiency. In response to the increasingly

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recognized importance of vocabulary knowledge, what methods can ameliorate EFL

learners' vocabulary acquisition ability is one of the biggest concerns to EFL

practitioners at the current time. That English is a franca lingua of the world stimulates

EFL teaching practice to gear towards communicative purposes. Vocabulary teaching is

not an exception. As the traditional teaching methods are unlikely to serve the goals of

EFL learning and teaching in the current context, innovative approaches are put on the

map. The attributes of TBLT make it fit the requirements and needs of the present EFL

vocabulary teaching and learning. It is believed that task, the central unit of TBLT,

creates a space for communicativeness and interaction to take place (Freeman, 2003).

When tasks are used for teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom, learners are more

likely to gather lexical knowledge when trying to accomplish the tasks.

A considerable amount of research has reported the positive effects of TBLT

application in vocabulary instruction. The use of TBLT in teaching vocabulary in English

for specific purposes (ESP) courses was reported to be more effective than the traditional

teaching method (Sarani & Sahebi, 2012). It is described in their study that enriching

their vocabulary knowledge through tasks allows learners to retain, retrieve, and use

words more effectively. The same positive relationship between Task-Based Language

Leaching and vocabulary learning is reported in the study by Fallahrafie, Rahmany, &

Sadeghi (2015). When compared to the traditional vocabulary teaching methods, TBLT

appears to be superior in helping EFL learners pick up technical vocabulary. The

potential of employing TBLT in teaching vocabulary is also strengthened in the study by

Khoshisima (2016), who investigates the effects of some task-based vocabulary teaching

techniques on learners' vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency. The use of

jigsaw and information-gap tasks are responsive to the purposes of increasing EFL

learners' lexical capacity.

CHAPTER III   METHODOLODY

This study tackled the following research questions:

1.   To what extent do Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers report that they use Task-Based Language Teaching to teach vocabulary?

2.   Is there a significant correlation between teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience?

3.   What challenges and constraints are Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers facing in employing TBLT for vocabulary instruction?

This descriptive study used a mixed methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data in the form of descriptive statistics served to describe the phenomena regarding classroom-based teachers' practice of task-based vocabulary instruction. Qualitative data in the form of narrative data further explained the participants' thoughts and beliefs behind their choice stated in the Likert scale questionnaire. This section gives an insight into how the research data were collected. Specifically, the information of the participants, the research setting, the instruments, and the procedure is included.

3.1   Participants

The research employed the participation of 60 high-school EFL teachers (55 females and 5 females), aging from 28 to 47, from different schools in Vietnam. The collected data showed that 53.5% belonged to the group of junior teachers (2-10 years of teaching experience), and the rest of 46.7% are senior teachers (more than 10 years of teaching experience). There was no teacher from the group of novice teachers (less than 2

years of teaching experience) due to the latest policy of limiting the recruitment of new high-school teachers in Vietnam. The majority of the teacher participants (78.3%) held Bachelor's Degree, and the rest of 21.7% obtained Master's Degree. No participant gained Doctoral Degree.

The method of snowball sampling was used to call for the participation and at the same time contribute to increasing the randomness of the research sample selection. Participants qualified to be teaching English as a foreign language at a high school in Vietnam were invited to be part of the research. Participants are notably responsible for teaching students of the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, and were expected to demonstrate their interest in employing the Task-Based Language Teaching method in vocabulary instruction.

3.2   Research setting

The research was conducted with Vietnamese teachers. The research aimed to investigate Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in using TBLT in teaching vocabulary using mandated EFL textbooks. Every EFL teaching session in Vietnamese high-school classrooms lasts 45 minutes. The class size is often quite big, normally around 35 to 40 students, often with poor to modest teaching facilities and conditions.

3.3   Instruments

This study sought to see how Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers perceived and applied the concept of TBLT in teaching vocabulary. Even though TBLT is viewed as

one of the most innovative and effective EFL teaching methods, and it has been claimed as a central part of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam, the extent to which classroom-based teachers understand this method and employ it in their practical teaching, particularly in teaching vocabulary, is still a question that needs to be answered. To gain in-depth information regarding participants' beliefs and practices, a Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 23 items was used to collect data. The questionnaire was designed based on the well-established assumptions related to TBLT methodology and EFL teaching and learning in the Vietnamese context.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 13 items, each followed with five options— *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often,* and *Always*, aimed to respond to the first research question. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 items, each followed with five options ranging from *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree,* and *Strongly disagree.* In addition, a box was provided under each item for participants to further explain their answers.

In order to increase the validity of the questionnaire, the items were stated in simple language, accompanied with Vietnamese. The purpose of using a bilingual questionnaire was to facilitate ease of language with the subjects while attending to the readers of this thesis. It took around 15 to 20 minutes for participants to read the questionnaire and reflect upon their own teaching experiences. The researcher was willing to give the explanation to any question or concern related to the questionnaire (see below).

Questionnaire: Teachers' application of TBLT in vocabulary instruction

Bio-data

The information you provide in this section will help us understand your responses. Be assured that we will not reveal your identity to anyone. Results will be reported in the aggregate, and no individual participants will be identified. Thank you!

1. Your gender: ……………..
2. Your age: ……………..
3. Your teaching experience:

    ◯   Novice (less than 2 years)

    ◯   Junior (2-10 years)

    ◯   Senior (more than 10 years)

4. Qualifications:

    ◯   BA (Bachelor's Degree)

    ◯   MA (Master's Degree)

    ◯   Ph.D. (Doctoral Degree)

5. The school where you teach: ………………………………………….

Part I-Vocabulary instruction principles

Below are a number of vocabulary instruction principles in the EFL classroom. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate how often your vocabulary instruction is based on the following principles by ticking (√) the appropriate circle.

Never=1; Rarely=2; Sometimes=3; Often=4; Always=5

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know your own experiences.

1. In vocabulary instruction, I follow three steps: 1. theme introduction and vocabulary eliciting, 2. vocabulary use for meaningful, authentic, and 3. communicative task completion, and follow-up activities.

(Trong việc dạy từ mới, tôi tuân theo ba bước: giới thiệu về chủ đề và gợi ý từ vựng, sử dụng từ vựng để hoàn thành nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp, và các hoạt động tiếp theo.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

2. In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which involve students communicating and exchanging information.

(Trong việc dạy từ vựng, tôi sử dụng các hoạt động liên quan mật thiết tới việc học sinh giao tiếp và trao đổi thông tin.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

3. In the first vocabulary eliciting step, I give my students the chance to predict, search, and exchange the form, meaning, and use of new vocabulary.

(Trong bước hướng dẫn từ vựng đầu tiên, tôi tạo cho học sinh của mình cơ hội dự đoán, tìm kiếm và trao đổi hình thái, ý nghĩa và cách dùng của từ mới.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

4. After the first vocabulary eliciting step, I ask my students to use the new vocabulary to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks (e.g. making a phone call, writing an email, etc.).

(Sau bước hướng dẫn từ vựng đầu tiên, tôi yêu cầu học sinh sử dụng từ mới để hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp, ví dụ: thực hiện cuộc gọi điện thoại, viết thư điện tử, v.v.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

5. In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which are related to the real world, e.g.

telling a story, solving a problem, giving directions, etc.

(Trong việc dạy từ mới, tôi sử dụng các hoạt động liên quan đến thế giới thực, ví dụ: kể một câu chuyện, giải quyết vấn đề, chỉ đường, v.v.)

                      1   2   3   4   5

Never ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

6. In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which are interesting to learners.

(Trong việc dạy từ mới, tôi sử dụng các hoạt động rất thú vị đối với học sinh.)

                      1   2   3   4   5

Never ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

7. To help students reinforce new vocabulary understanding, I use meaningful, authentic

and communicative activities, which tap into students' previous knowledge of

vocabulary.

(Để giúp học sinh củng cố hiểu biết về từ mới, tôi sử dụng các hoạt động có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp, đòi hỏi học sinh tận dụng vốn kiến thức từ vựng trước đó.)

                      1   2   3   4   5

Never ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

8. I play an active role in guiding and supporting students to complete meaningful,

authentic, and communicative tasks using the new vocabulary.

(Tôi đóng vai trò tích cực trong việc hướng dẫn và hỗ trợ học sinh hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp đòi hỏi tới việc sử dụng từ mới.)

                      1   2   3   4   5

Never ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

9. In vocabulary instruction, I ask students to work in pairs or groups to solve problems involving the use of new vocabulary.

(Trong quá trình dạy từ mới, tôi yêu cầu học sinh làm việc theo cặp hoặc nhóm, sử dụng từ mới như là một trong những công cụ để giải quyết các vấn đề.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: ………………………………………………………..

10. I incorporate authentic materials, e.g. restaurant menus, tourism brochures, etc. to teach vocabulary.

(Tôi kết hợp các nguồn tài liệu thực tế, ví dụ: thực đơn nhà hàng, tờ rơi du lịch, v.v. để dạy từ vựng.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: ………………………………………………………..

11. I evaluate students' knowledge of vocabulary based on their ability to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks using the new vocabulary.

(Tôi đánh giá kiến thức từ vựng của học sinh dựa trên khả năng hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp đòi hỏi tới việc sử dụng từ mới.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: ………………………………………………………..

12. In vocabulary instruction, I employ activities, which are based on the 'gap' principle, e.g. information-gap, opinion-gap, and reasoning-gap activities, in which students interact and negotiate with peers using the new vocabulary to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks.

(Trong việc dạy từ mới, tôi sử dụng các hoạt động dựa trên nguyên tắc 'khuyết thiếu', ví dụ: các hoạt động khuyết thiếu thông tin, khuyết thiếu ý kiến, khuyết thiếu lý luận, trong đó học sinh tương tác và đàm phán với bạn, đòi hỏi sử dụng từ mới để hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

13. In vocabulary instruction, I prioritize fostering in students the ability to use the vocabulary to address daily tasks, e.g. visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, etc.

(Trong việc dạy từ mới, tôi đề cao nhất là phát triển cho học sinh khả năng sử dụng từ vựng để giải quyết các nhiệm vụ hàng ngày, ví dụ: thăm khám bệnh, phỏng vấn, v.v.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

Part II-Issues and challenges in vocabulary instruction

Below are a number of issues and challenges regarding vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom. Please read each statement carefully, and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking (√) the appropriate circle.

Strongly Disagree=1; Disagree=2; Neutral=3; Agree=4; Strongly Agree=5

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know your own experiences.

14. My limited exposure to English outside the classroom negatively affects my ability to design meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities for vocabulary instruction.

(Hạn chế trong việc sử dụng tiếng Anh ngoài lớp học ảnh hưởng tiêu cực đến khả năng của tôi trong việc thiết kế các hoạt động có ý nghĩa , mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp cho việc giảng dạy từ mới.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

15. Focus on formal written exams restricts my possibility to teach vocabulary to address daily communication tasks.

(Áp lực dạy để phục vụ cho thi cử hạn chế khả năng của tôi để dạy từ vựng theo hướng giải quyết các nhiệm vụ giao tiếp hàng ngày.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

16. I find it challenging to design appropriate vocabulary teaching activities for mixed-ability students in my class.

(Tôi thấy rất khó để thiết kế các hoạt động giảng dạy từ vựng thích hợp cho các lớp học với học sinh có trình độ ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh khác nhau.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

17. Due to time limitation, I am often short of time for meaningful, authentic, and communicative vocabulary teaching activities.

(Do hạn chế về thời gian, tôi thường thiếu thời gian để tiến hành các hoạt động giảng dạy từ vựng một cách có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………..

18. The traditional classroom setting restricts my implementation of meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities in teaching vocabulary.

(Cách bố trí lớp học truyền thống hạn chế tôi trong việc thực hiện các hoạt động dạy từ vựng một cách có ý nghĩa, mang tính thực tế và giao tiếp.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

19. The English textbooks my school currently use hardly ever provide adequate meaningful task-based activities for vocabulary teaching.

(Sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh mà trường tôi hiện đang sử dụng hầu như không cung cấp đầy đủ các hoạt động dạy từ mới một cách có ý nghĩa và theo đường hướng nhiệm vụ.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

20. I think I need a particularly designed training program (course) in the Task-Based Language Teaching method.

(Tôi nghĩ rằng tôi cần một chương trình đào tạo/khóa học được thiết kế đặc biệt về ứng dụng phương pháp Giảng dạy Ngôn ngữ dựa trên Nhiệm vụ.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

21. I hardly understand how to employ the Task-Based Language Teaching method to teach vocabulary.

(Tôi hầu như không hiểu làm thế nào để sử dụng phương pháp Giảng dạy Ngôn ngữ dựa trên Nhiệm vụ để dạy từ vựng.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: …………………………………………………………..

22. My students are familiar with traditional vocabulary instructions (e.g. translation, words matching, etc.)

(Học sinh của tôi đã quá quen với các phương pháp dạy từ mới truyền thống, ví dụ: dịch thuật, nối từ, v.v.)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: ………………………………………………………..

23. My students hesitate to engage in meaningful, authentic, and communicative vocabulary instruction.

(Học sinh của tôi khá là dè dặt và thụ động trong việc tham gia vào các hoạt động dạy từ mới mang tính ý nghĩa, ứng dụng thực tế, và giao tiếp.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Please further explain your answer: ………………………………………………………..

Table 5. Categories of questionnaire items

Criteria of TBLT in vocabulary instruction	Questions
1. Framework of TBLT	Q1
2. Meaning-focused	Q2, Q3
3. Authenticity	Q4, Q5, Q10
4. Engaging activities integration	Q6
5. Available resources utilization	Q7
6. Teachers' and students' roles	Q3, Q8, Q9
7. Task-completion priority & Outcome-based assessment	Q11
8. 'Gap'-based tasks	Q12
9. Goal or an outcome	Q13

Affective factors	Questions
1. Teachers' language competency	Q14
2. Exam-oriented curriculum	Q15
3. Students' language competency	Q16
4. Time limitation	Q17
5. Classroom setting	Q18
6. Textbook	Q19
7. Teachers' TBLT pedagogical knowledge	Q20, Q21
8. Students' learning attitudes	Q22, Q23

3.4   Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to a pilot group of participants through email via Google Forms to test the validity and reliability. The initial participants were those the researcher has known. They were encouraged to spread the questionnaire to other colleagues who were interested in the research topic.

The research then was sent to the target group of participants. When participants completed and submitted the questionnaire, the results were returned automatically to the researcher, as the result of Google Forms technology. If participants had any question, they were encouraged to contact the researcher via email for immediate assistance.

3.5   Analysis of results

The results of the questionnaire were coded based on the categories (see below) which each item belongs to. The first part of the questionnaire examined to what extent the participating teachers applied TBLT in teaching vocabulary by asking them to report their practice of TBLT criteria in their teaching. The collected data in this part served to answer the two first research questions. The second part of the survey required the teachers to indicate what challenges and constraints might hinder them from using TBLT to teach vocabulary, corresponding to the third research question.

Specifically, as for the first and third research questions, participants' responses for each scale were aggregated and calculated in percentage proportion to figure out to what extent the participants were using TBLT in vocabulary instruction, and what challenges they were facing when applying the new teaching method in teaching vocabulary. In order to address the second question as for the relationship between two

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variables, classroom-based teachers' years of teaching experience and task-based

vocabulary instruction practice, the Pearson's correlation coefficient value was calculated

through the statistics program SPSS. The independent variable, teachers' years of

teaching, was collected from the demographic investigation section of the questionnaire.

The dependent variable, teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice, was

measured in the 5-point Likert scale. Each participant 's task-based vocabulary

instruction practice score was calculated by adding up all the points they achieved for

each statement.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

The project obtained ethical approval from the Human Ethics Committee, Florida

International University, before the data collection process started (see Appendix 1). Data

collection started from 15 January to 30 January, 2018. The research participants,

Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers, were invited to participate in the project via

emails (see Appendix 2). In the invitation letter, it was emphasized that the data were

collected for research purposes only, and confidentiality and anonymity were highly

guaranteed. The participants had their own right to refuse to participate in or withdraw

from the project at any stage without any penalty if they wished. It was also clearly stated

that the collected data would be reported in aggregate; therefore, no individual

information would be revealed. The data would be deleted right after the project

completion.

CHAPTER IV   RESULTS

This research aimed to capture a picture of how high-school EFL teachers employed TBLT in vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary is a central component of language teaching. Teaching vocabulary by using TBLT will facilitate students' communication ability. In Vietnam, TBLT is currently deemed as the central discourse of EFL language teaching and learning curriculum. To what extent classroom-based teachers exploit this newly-introduced language teaching method in vocabulary instruction is still a concern. Whether or not years of teaching experience are indicative of the difference in the extent of TBLT employment to teach vocabulary is worthy of research. Additionally, what factors may hinder Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers from applying TBLT in the classroom needs to be deciphered. The following section is allocated to present the collected results regarding three afore-mentioned big concerns.

1. To what extent do Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers report that they use Task-Based Language Teaching to teach vocabulary?
2. Is there a significant correlation between teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience?
3. What challenges and constraints are Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers facing in employing TBLT for vocabulary instruction?

4.1   To what extent do Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers report that they use Task-Based Language Teaching to teach vocabulary?

The appearance of TBLT principles in the classroom is considered the parameter to conclude whether or not TBLT methodology is used in the classroom. According to the statistical analysis (Table 6), the majority of participants reported that they employed

TBLT in vocabulary instruction. It can be seen that the demonstration of some criteria is

more pronounced than others.

Table 6. Questionnaire Response Percentage – Part I

N = 60	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
Q1: In vocabulary instruction, I follow three steps: 1. theme introduction and vocabulary eliciting, 2. vocabulary use for meaningful, authentic, and 3. communicative task completion, and follow-up activities.	1.7%	3.3%	26.7%	48.3%	20%
Q2: In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which involve students communicating and exchanging information.	0%	10%	28.3%	40%	21.7%
Q3: In the first vocabulary eliciting step, I give my students the chance to predict, search, and exchange the form, meaning, and use of new vocabulary	1.7%	8.3%	18.3%	40%	31.7%
Q4: After the first vocabulary eliciting step, I ask my students to use the new vocabulary to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks (e.g. making a phone call, writing an email, etc.).	3.3%	16.7%	31.7%	33.3%	15%
Q5: In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which are related to the real world, e.g. telling a story, solving a problem, giving directions, etc.	1.7%	11.7%	23.3%	48.3%	15%
Q6: In vocabulary instruction, I use activities, which are interesting to learners.	0%	3.3%	50%	33.3%	13.3%

|					
Q7: To help students reinforce new vocabulary understanding, I use meaningful, authentic and communicative activities, which tap into students' previous knowledge of vocabulary.	1.7%	13.3%	28.3%	41.7%	15%
Q8: I play an active role in guiding and supporting students to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks using the new vocabulary.	0%	10%	36.7%	38.3%	15%
Q9: In vocabulary instruction, I ask students to work in pairs or groups to solve problems involving the use of new vocabulary.	0%	6.7%	35%	36.7%	21.7%
Q10: I incorporate authentic materials, e.g. restaurant menus, tourism brochures, etc. to teach vocabulary.	10%	23.3%	36.7%	25%	5%
Q11: I evaluate students' knowledge of vocabulary based on their ability to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks using the new vocabulary.	1.7%	8.3%	35%	41.7%	13.3%
Q12: In vocabulary instruction, I employ activities, which are based on the 'gap' principle, e.g. information-gap, opinion-gap, and reasoning-gap activities, in which students interact and negotiate with peers using the new vocabulary to complete meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks.	0%	16.7%	40%	35%	8.3%

Q13: In vocabulary instruction, I prioritize fostering in students the ability to use the vocabulary to address daily tasks, e.g. visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, etc.	1.7%	13.3%	45%	26.7%	13.3%

The results of the first part were categorized into 9 groups for the analysis in accordance with the major principles of TBLT as follows.

4.1.1   Framework of TBLT

As stated clearly in the literature review section, a language lesson grounded on TBLT methodology involves three major steps: Pre-Task, During-Task, and Post-Task. The sequence of task ensures students' opportunities to acquire the target language in a logical and systematical way. It is common to see that in the traditional classroom, the act of teaching vocabulary only stopped at vocabulary presentation. It is even worse when vocabulary is introduced in a vacuum. Contexts in which the target language may be used are not mentioned. Consequently, learners are confused or unable to use the provided language appropriately in the authentic communication. Question 1 serves to look into the actual implementation of vocabulary procedure by Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers with the results demonstrated as follows.

Figure 1. The extent of TBLT framework application
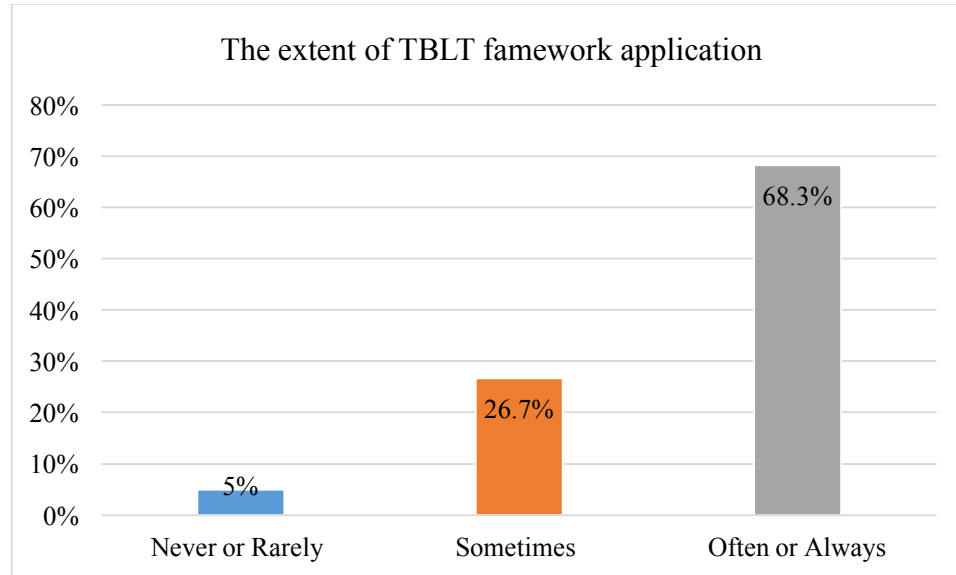
Out of the 60 questioned, 41 (accounting for 68.8%) responded that they either "often" or "always" conducted teaching vocabulary with three mentioned steps. Students are given the chance to use the new vocabulary to address meaningful, authentic and communicative tasks after the first step of getting to know the words. It was further explained by the questioned that these steps of teaching vocabulary helped learners actually know the words. To put it another way, students can remember, retrieve, and use the words effectively. Only 5% admitted not following the sequence of three steps in teaching vocabulary. Some factors resulting in participants' skipping the sequence is students' language proficiency level and time limitation. It was assumed by some of the participants that this frame of vocabulary instruction worked better on intermediate and advanced rather than beginning learners, and time limitation discouraged them from running the vocabulary teaching lesson through three steps.

4.1.2   Meaning-focused

This is the central point to distinguish TBLT from any other language teaching method. *Meaning* refers to pragmatic meaning, which is closely attached to the real communication contexts. Teaching vocabulary with TBLT approach bolsters learners' ability to use the new vocabulary to convey meaning across, which is necessary for any daily communication task. Questions 2 and 3 together aim to evaluate if vocabulary instruction led by Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers is meaning-focused. The meaning-focused feature of TBLT is displayed through the use of activities which involves students' communicating and exchanging information.

Figure 2. The extent of meaning-focused feature integration
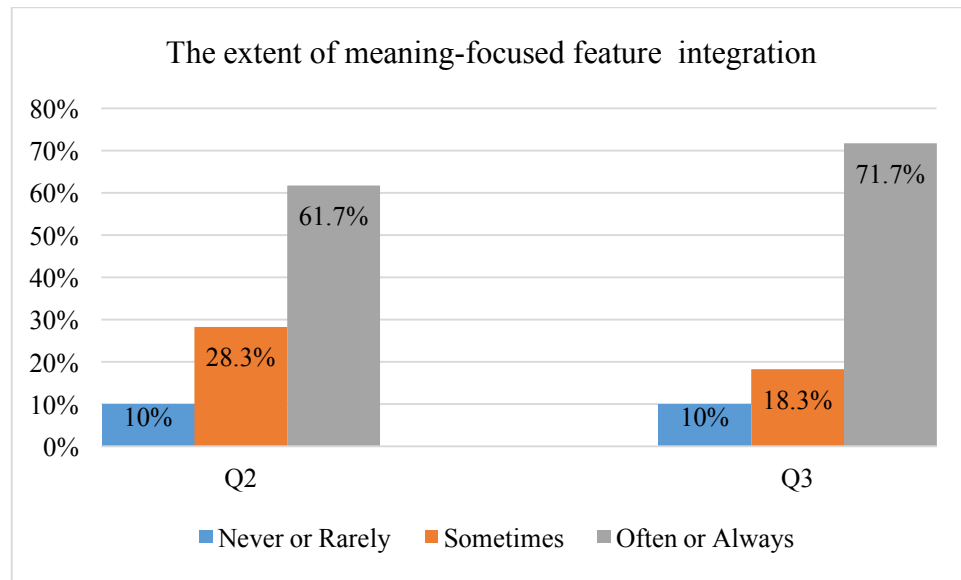
As for question 2, 61.7% of the participants confirmed that negotiating for desired information was the central part of their vocabulary instruction. Some informants elaborated that when new words were put into use for communication purposes, students would be able to understand and use the words more correctly in real communication later. Meanwhile, only 10% admitted the absence of highly communicative activities

when teaching vocabulary. One of the most common reasons for teachers not to employ communicative activities in vocabulary instruction is students' low level of English proficiency. Instead, some teachers revealed that they chose the traditional techniques such as pictures and translation to introduce new words, which do not involve a lot of students' communication and interaction. In the same trend, in question 3, the majority of participating teachers (accounting for 71.7%) opted for giving students the chance to negotiate for lexical forms, meaning and use. In this way, new lexical items are sharply understood by learners as the set of new words are supposedly created by them.

4.1.3   Authenticity

Authenticity is doubtlessly a typical feature of TBLT. Task concept in TBLT must be a simulation of daily activities, which involves communication. Questions 4, 5, and 10 attend to examining the authenticity of the vocabulary teaching by Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers.

Figure 3. The extent of authenticity integration
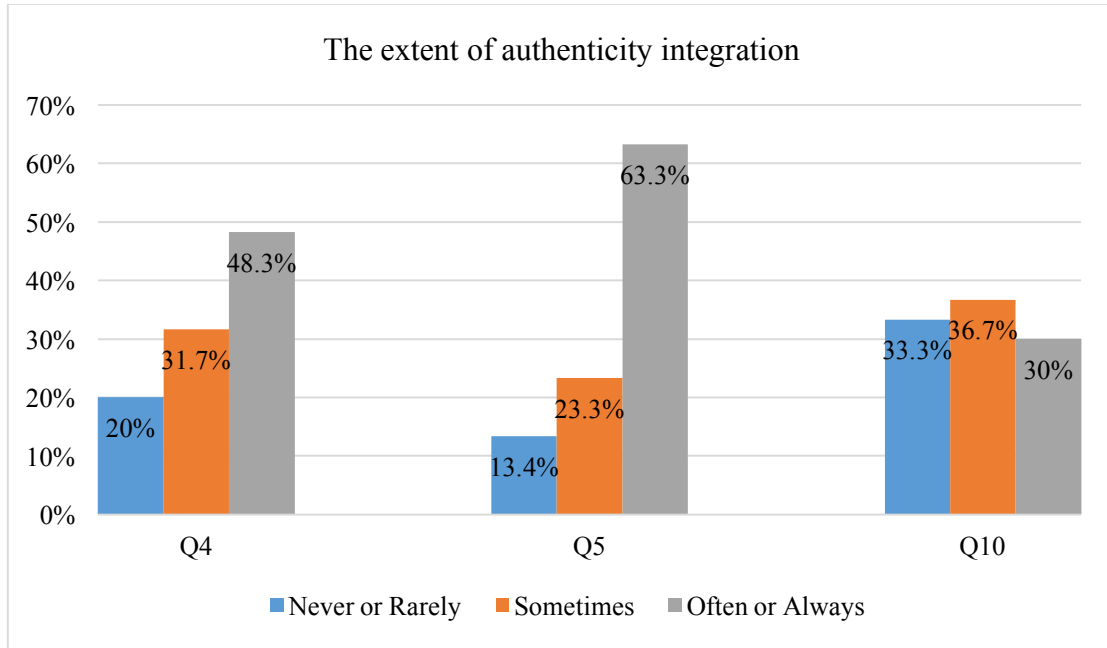
Responses to the question 4 showed that a considerable number of teachers found it challenging to integrate the authenticity into teaching vocabulary. Specifically, up to 20% confessed that they hardly implemented meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks after the first step of vocabulary introduction. Two factors which account for teachers' avoiding those tasks are students' language proficiency and time limitation. It was believed that those tasks were only suitable for advanced learners. Therefore, it would be time-consuming and distracting to students of low language proficiency level when those task-based activities were delivered. The chart showed that 48.3% of the participants marked it as "often" or "always", while 31.7% stated that they sometimes incorporated such a kind of task into vocabulary instruction. As for the relevance of the classroom activities to the real world, 63.3% of the participants confirmed that their vocabulary teaching was grounded upon what learners often addressed in daily life, for

example, giving directions or telling a story. Nevertheless, 13.4% of the participants disclosed that their vocabulary instruction was not connected to real-life activities. It was further explained that due to the excessive workload, teachers tended to bring as many words up as possible. Consequently, creating the chance for students to connect what they learn to the real-world activities was not teachers' priority anymore.

One of the effective strategies to foster learners' competence of using language for communication is employing authentic materials such as restaurant menus, tourism brochures, and cooking guide videos. This way can familiarize students with the target vocabulary in real contexts. However, authentic materials utilization is not popular among the participants when 33.3% of the participants stated that they did not use. The absence of authentic materials in vocabulary instruction stemmed from a variety of reasons. Specifically, authentic materials are time-consuming to prepare and not always available, and lesson topics are determinant of whether or not authentic materials can be used. Meanwhile, 36.7% stated that they sometimes exploited authentic materials as an effective source of vocabulary teaching aid. Only 30% were strong advocates of authentic materials utilization in vocabulary instruction.

4.1.4   Learners' engagement

Learners' great interest in classroom activities is an important reflection of TBLT. The activities based on TBLT methodology should increase learners' engagement. Students' active participation can originate from either their desire for completion or task authenticity.

Figure 4. The extent of engaging activities integration
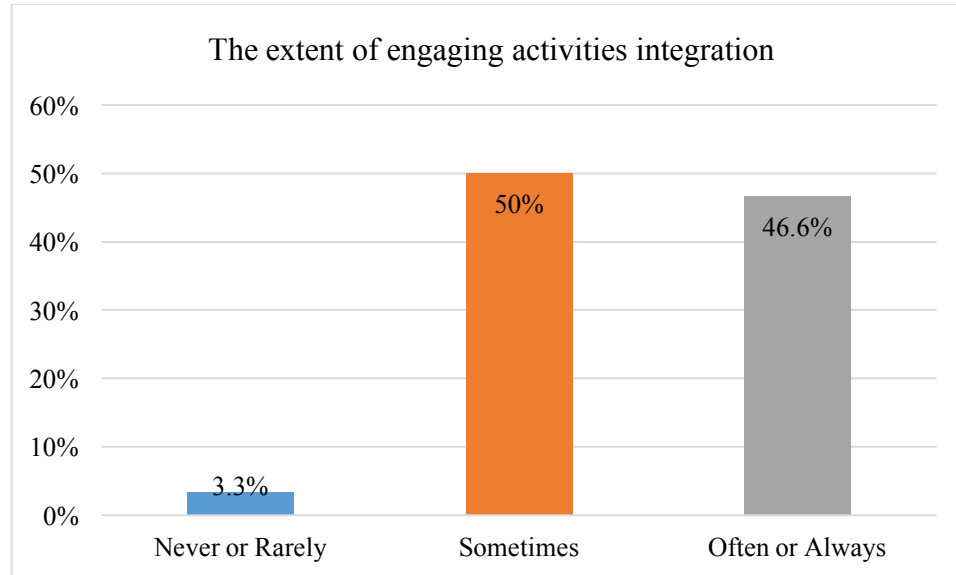
46.6% of the participants attached their vocabulary instruction to interesting activities. Half of the surveyed responded that they sometimes used interesting activities in vocabulary instruction. Even though only 3.3% rarely paid attention to the engagement of the vocabulary teaching activities, the reasons for their choice is worth considering. The most common reason is related to learners' low level of language proficiency. Hence, many teachers believed that there was no need to care about whether or not activities were interesting. The focus was letting students know words and their Vietnamese equivalents. Another hindrance to dessigning interesting activities in vocabulary instruction is teachers' attitudes and teaching capacity. Adapting and designing vocabulary teaching activities in a new way, which, according to them, may cause students' embarrassment. It was further specified by some participants that it was difficult and time-consuming to create interesting activities in vocabulary instruction.

4.1.5   Available resources utilization

Teaching based on TBLT allows and encourages learners to retrieve and utilize available sources of knowledge to complete tasks. In this way, learners are able to reinforce their previous knowledge and create a bond between what they knew and what they get to know. In teaching vocabulary, it is imperative to create meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities which tap into students' previous knowledge of vocabulary.

Figure 5. The extent of available resources utilization emphasis
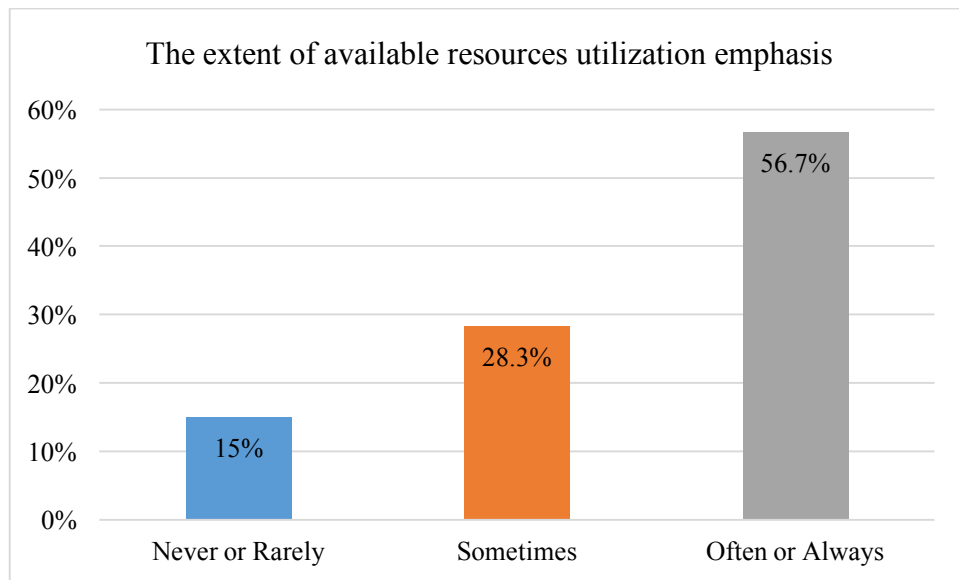
This strategy was declared to be commonly used among 56.7% of the participants. 28.3% reported "sometimes", and the remaining of 15% with "never" and "rarely." It was explained that mandated textbooks restricted teachers to implement vocabulary instruction in the desired way. Instead, they chose traditional techniques to check students' knowledge of what had been taught.

4.1.6   Teachers' and students' roles

The roles of teachers and students are defined clearly in TBLT. Students are considered the central agents of the classroom while teachers play a versatile role.

Teachers are responsible for facilitating, guiding, supporting, and even co-operating with learners for the purpose of task completion. A task-based lesson calls for students' active engagement at any time. Contrary to the traditional vocabulary instruction, in which words are directly presented, TBLT emphasizes the central role of learners right in the first step of vocabulary presentation.

Figure 6. The extent of student-centered activities integration
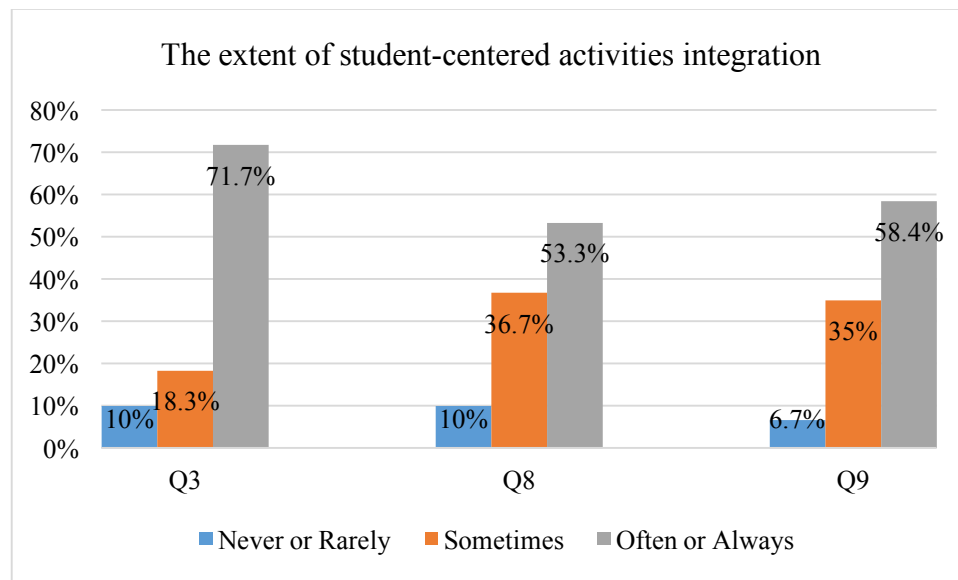
Question 3, 8, and 9 touch upon this element of TBLT. As shown in the chart, up to 71.7% of the participants stated that they did give students the chance to predict, search, and exchange the form, meaning, and use of new vocabulary. It was specified by the advocates that this way of vocabulary eliciting encouraged learners' engagement in and responsibility for lexical knowledge searching. The set of new vocabulary will be built up by students themselves, and not anyone else. In this way, students possibly work in pairs or groups, cooperating to solve tasks. However, 10% of the questioned disclosed that they did not introduce new words in the proposed manner. They chose to present new

words directly in which teachers played the role of a giver and students as receivers. There was no further explanation for their practice.

Question 8 aims to explore the role of teachers from their own perception. The collected data showed that 53.3% of the participating teachers reported their active role of a guide and supporter in teaching vocabulary through meaningful, authentic, and communicative tasks. One of the participants added that interesting activities would raise up students' activeness and engagement, and turned teachers into supportive companions. A large number of teachers, making up 36.7%, presented that they sometimes participated as an active companion to learners during vocabulary instruction. The rest of teachers confessed that they only gave students assignments and feedbacks in the form of answers.

Negotiation for meaning must involve pair or group work in the classroom. Group or pair work maximizes student's time and effort to be the central agents of the classroom. The chart showed that 58.4% of the participants strongly acknowledged the importance of pair or group work in vocabulary instruction. As further explained by one of the participating teachers, pair or group work would help learners enrich each other's knowledge through communication. When students are arranged to work in pairs or groups to solve a problem, they are likely to cooperate to work it out. This necessarily promotes communication and interaction among students. Yet, 6.7% of the participants reported not to use pair or group work among students in vocabulary instruction.

4.1.7   Task-completion priority and outcome-based assessment

Figure 7. The extent task-completion and outcome-based emphasis

The extent task-completion and outcome-based emphasis

| Never or Rarely	Sometimes	Often or Always
10%	35%	55%
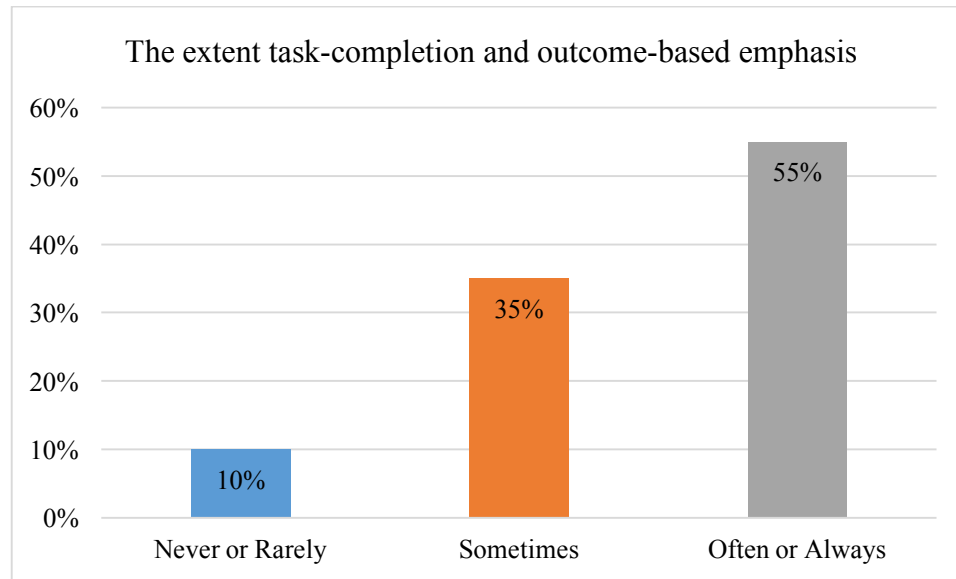
Task-based vocabulary instruction can be likened to a journey, in which learners gain language knowledge by their own learning experiences while heading to the destination, task completion. In such a way, learners are more intrinsically and extrinsically motivated towards a non-linguistic goal. The language acquisition takes place in the most natural way in the classroom. At the same time, teachers' evaluation shifts from testing students' lexical knowledge in decontextualization to contextualization. The evaluation is based on how much students can use what they have learned to address a realistic task. Results of question 11 revealed that 55% of the participating teachers frequently considered task completion using the target vocabulary as the biggest evaluation criterion. As can be seen from the chart, 35% of participating teachers stated that they "sometimes" graded students based on their ability to use vocabulary in life-simulating contexts, and the rest of the questioned reported "never or rarely".

It was confirmed by those who were the advocates of task-completion priority and outcome-based assessment that students actually understood new vocabulary when they knew how to use newly-provided lexical items for clear communication purposes. However, it was pinpointed by one of the participants that evaluating students' lexical knowledge depended on learners' proficiency level.

4.1.8   'Gap'-based tasks

Figure 8. The extent of 'gap'-based tasks integration
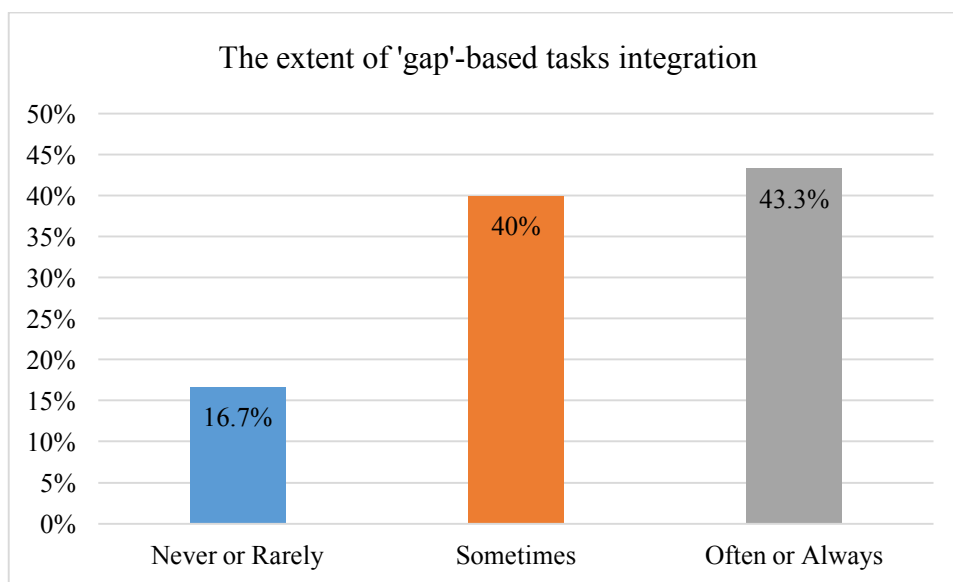
When talking about TBLT, it is necessary to mention 'gap'-based tasks. Task in TBLT is, in nature, a problem that needs to be addressed, which can be related to information gap, opinion gap, or reason gap. Tasks may be designed in various ways to fit learning goals; however, all tasks must originate from the 'gap' principle. According to the chart, 43.3% of the surveyed agreed that their vocabulary teaching activities were framed upon 'gap' principle; 40% for "sometimes", meanwhile, 16.7% for "never" or "rarely". However, the concept of 'gap' in TBLT seems confusing to some Vietnamese EFL teachers when one of the participating teachers simply equated 'gap' to a task.

4.1.9   Goal/ Outcome

Figure 9. The extent of clearly-defined and non-linguistic goal/outcome emphasis
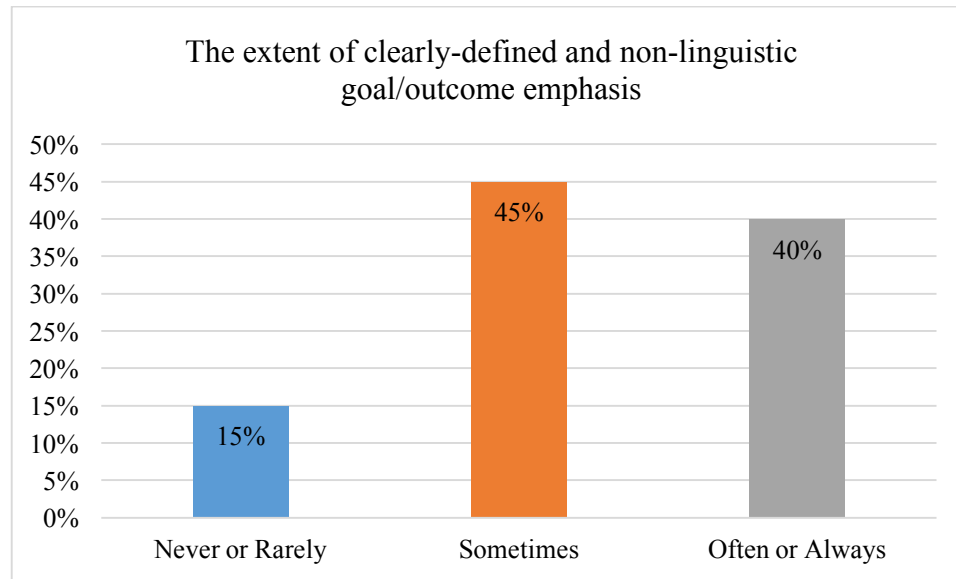
Emphasizing the importance of using the target language for authentic

communication is one of the most important attributes to make TBLT quickly well-

known among the EFL learning and teaching community. Task-based vocabulary

instruction helps to develop learners' ability to use vocabulary for daily communication

needs. This approach is completely different from the traditional approaches, in which

vocabulary teaching mostly serves for the classroom examinations. In response to

question 13, 45% of the participants assumed that they "sometimes" prioritized the

purpose of teaching vocabulary for daily tasks. 40% of the participating teachers "often"

or "always" incorporated the factor of daily tasks to vocabulary instruction. The

remaining 15% went for "never" and "rarely".

4.2   Is there a significant correlation between teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience?

As for the correlation between the extent of task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience, the result of Pearson's correlation shows that r = .056 ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the ability to conduct task-based vocabulary instruction and teaching years.

Figure 10. Pearson's correlation coefficients between task-based vocabulary instruction practice and years of teaching experience

Correlations

		Years of Teaching Experiences	Score
Years of Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.671
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	14.933	12.267
	Covariance	.253	.208
	N	60	60
Score	Pearson Correlation	.056	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.671	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	12.267	3222.933
	Covariance	.208	54.626
	N	60	60

Figure 11. Experienced-based correlation scatter plot for task-based vocabulary instruction practice
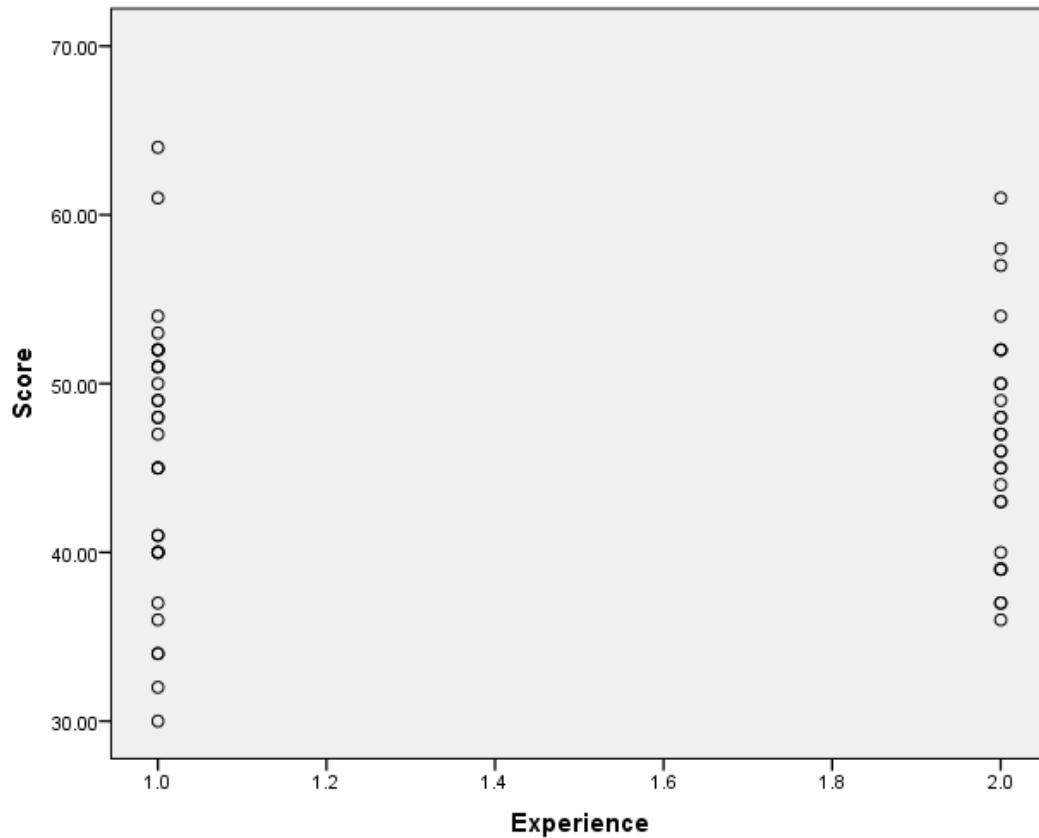
Note: 1.0: junior; 2.0: senior; score: participants' score of task-based vocabulary instruction practice

4.3 What challenges and constraints are Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers facing in employing TBLT for vocabulary instruction?

TBLT has emerged as a prominent language teaching and learning methodology all over the world. In Vietnam, TBLT has been declared as one of the major teaching discourses in EFL. However, in reality, teachers' practice of TBLT is still challenged by a variety of internal factors such as teachers' language competency and teachers' TBLT pedagogical knowledge, and external factors such as teaching curriculum, students' language competency, time allocation, classroom settings, textbooks, and students'

learning attitudes. Part II of the questionnaire, presented in Table 7, focuses on exploring

potential hindrances to the implementation of TBLT in vocabulary instruction among

Vietnamese EFL teachers.

Table 7. Questionnaire Response Percentage – Part II

N = 60	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q14: My limited exposure to English outside the classroom negatively affects my ability to design meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities for vocabulary instruction.	6.7%	6.7%	15%	43.3%	28.3%
Q15: Focus on formal written exams restricts my possibility to teach vocabulary to address daily communication tasks.	5%	1.7%	10%	33.3%	50%
Q16: I find it challenging to design appropriate vocabulary teaching activities for mixed-ability students in my class.	3.3%	6.7%	25%	36.7%	28.3%
Q17: Due to time limitation, I am often short of time for meaningful, authentic, and communicative vocabulary teaching activities.	3.3%	3.3%	15%	41.7%	36.7%
Q18: The traditional classroom setting restricts my implementation of meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities in teaching vocabulary.	6.7%	5%	15%	38.3%	35%
Q19: The English textbooks my school currently use hardly ever provide adequate meaningful task-based activities for vocabulary teaching.	3.3%	10%	20%	30%	36.7%

Q20: I think I need a particularly designed training program (course) in the Task-Based Language Teaching method.	3.3%	1.7%	28.3%	30%	36.7%
Q21: I hardly understand how to employ the Task-Based Language Teaching method to teach vocabulary.	10%	31.7%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%
Q22: My students are familiar with traditional vocabulary instructions (e.g. translation, words matching, etc.)	5%	13.3%	23.3%	33.3%	25%
Q23: My students hesitate to engage in meaningful, authentic, and communicative vocabulary instruction.	5%	5%	16.7%	38.3%	35%

4.3.1   Teachers' language competency

Teachers invariably play an important role in creating a successful language class. Particularly, to be able to employ TBLT successfully in the classroom, teachers need to be competent enough. Teachers' capacity is not only limited to academic knowledge. In addition, it is necessary for teachers to develop the ability to use the target language for real communication. In this survey, 71.6% of the participating teachers conceded that their limited exposure to English outside the classroom negatively affected their ability to design meaningful, authentic, and communicative activities for vocabulary instruction. It was further explained that teachers did not have adequate opportunities to enhance their language competency. The remaining 14.4% denied that language competency limitation was an obstacle to their task-based language teaching. Instead, the impediments were time and facilities.

Figure 12. Teachers' limited language competency negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction


Teachers' limited language competency negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction.
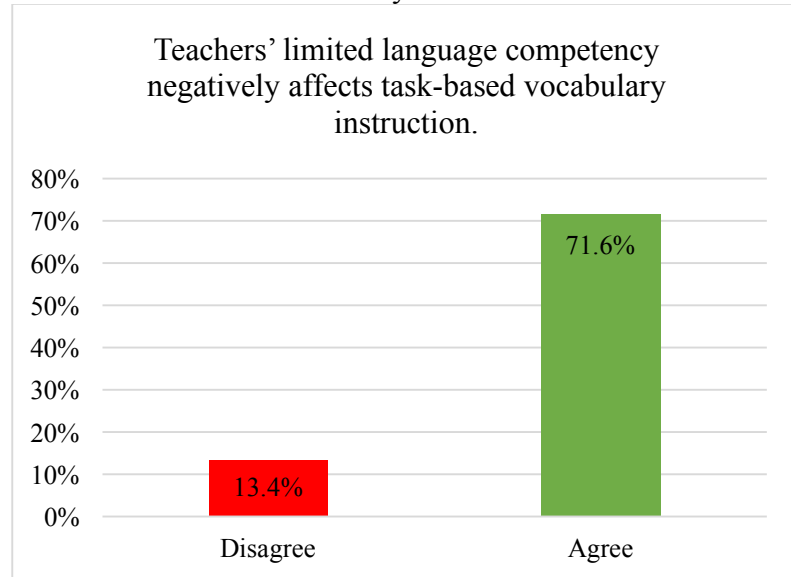
4.3.2   Exam-oriented curriculum

The current language teaching curriculum in Vietnam is still exam-oriented, which, needless to say, forces teachers to teach for exams and to meet the mandated standard. Thus, vocabulary instruction is still mostly for testing. Meanwhile, TBLT places much emphasis on building up and enhancing learners' ability to use language for practical use rather than theoretical exams only. Obviously, when trapped in exam-oriented teaching curriculum, teachers find it hard to design their language lesson upon TBLT. In fact, 83.3% agreed that they were under pressure of teaching English for exams. Some teachers further noted down that they had to make sure that students would do best in the exams, even in teaching vocabulary. Therefore, instead of focusing on developing students' skills of using new words in contexts for authentic communication, the attention is shifted to how to use new words to complete exam-related exercises.

Meaning of words conveyed to learners are not pragmatic meanings; instead, they are meanings presented initially in decontextualized fashions.

Figure 13. Exam-based curriculum discourages teachers from task-based vocabulary Instruction

Exam-based curriculum discourages teachers from task-based vocabulary instruction.

	Disagree	Agree
	6.7%	83.3%
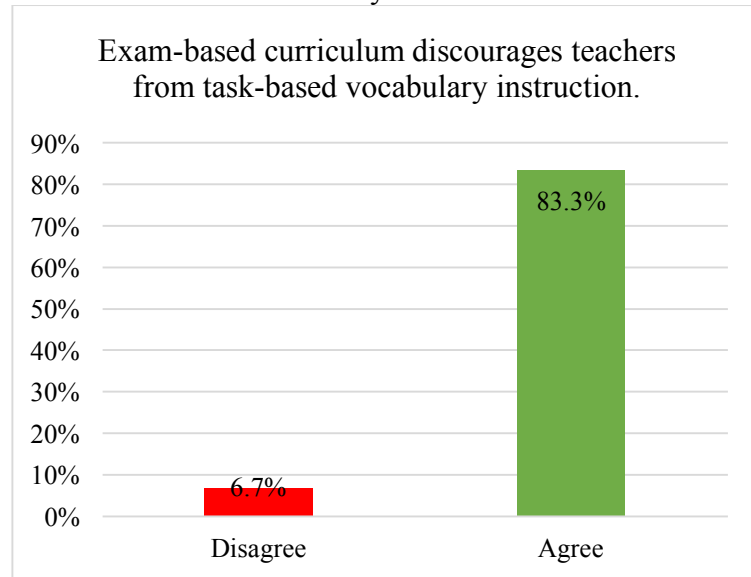
4.3.3   Students' language competency

Students' language proficiency level is another major factor affecting the implementation of task-based vocabulary instruction. TBLT teaching can be used for different levels of language proficiency, from beginner to advanced. However, when students are of mixed ability, it may be a big challenge to teachers. Survey results indicated that 65% of the participating teachers expressed their agreement that mixed-ability classroom makes it harder for them to design appropriate vocabulary teaching activities. It was added that because of learners' different levels in the classroom, only some of the whole class could understand what teachers meant; most of the students did not pay much attention to English classroom due to their lack of basic English knowledge.

Figure 14. Mixed-ability classroom negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction
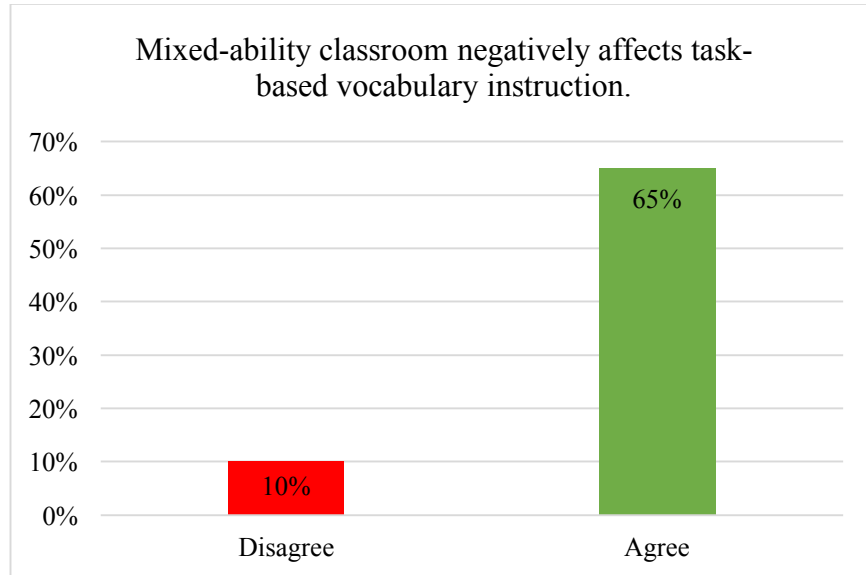
4.3.4   Time limitation

Allocated time in the classroom is a factor to be considered by any teacher when conducting a lesson. Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers are not an exception. Most of them must face the difficulty of limited time. An EFL class session lasts 45 minutes, in which they must both cover grammatical and lexical knowledge and develop macro-skills for learners. What teachers are expected to address during a 45-minute lesson becomes overwhelming to them. A large number of participating teachers (78.4%) pointed out that they were under time pressure; therefore, task-based vocabulary instruction was negatively affected. They made clear that the teaching syllabus was mandated and fixed; thus, they must try to cover as much content as possible regardless of what methods were best for vocabulary teaching. Moreover, it was stated that workload was another problem they must face. Teachers had to teach many classes of different levels per day, which, according to participating teachers, led to shortage of time for lesson plan creativity in general and for vocabulary teaching in particular.

Figure 15. Classroom time limitation negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction

Classroom time limitation negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction.

	Disagree	Agree
	6.6%	78.4%
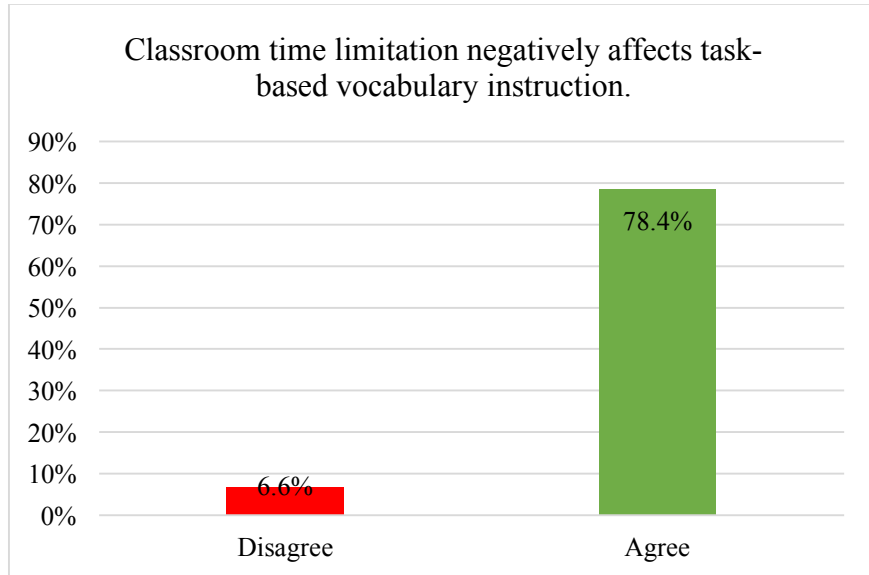
4.3.5   Classroom setting

A traditional classroom setting in almost all of the Vietnamese high schools is regarded as one of the hindrances to the implementation of task-based vocabulary instruction. Students are arranged to sit in rows on long benches, which is deemed hard for interactive and communicative activities. Especially, when lessons are based on TBLT, tasks are daily activities simulation. Learners need to have space for the interactive pair or group work activities. However, according to 73.3% of the participating teachers, their current classroom setting genuinely discouraged them from employing TBLT. Some teachers described that their single classroom was occupied with 40 students, too crowded to manage, especially in a language class which required interaction and communication.

Figure 16. The traditional classroom setting negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction


The traditional classroom setting negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction.

- Disagree: 11.7%
- Agree: 73.3%
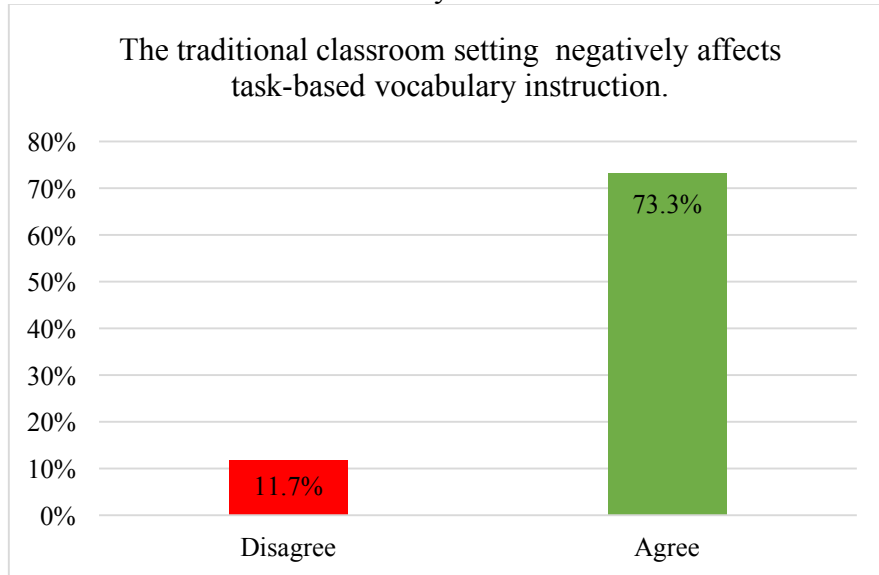
4.3.6   Mandated textbooks

Mandated textbooks are normally a crucial source of the teaching aid. However, textbooks can be discouraging to EFL learning and teaching if they are not tailored to meet specific needs and purposes of learners and teachers. Currently, two sets of English textbooks are used for high schools in Vietnam. However, the study aims to investigate teachers' perspective on the most-used set of textbooks, not the trial ones. The statement that the English textbooks currently used in Vietnamese high schools hardly ever provide adequate meaningful task-based activities for vocabulary teaching was supported by 66.7% of the participating teachers. It was specified that the currently used textbooks really needed adapting to be suitable for students' levels and teachers' goals.

Figure 17. Mandated EFL textbooks discourage task-based vocabulary instruction
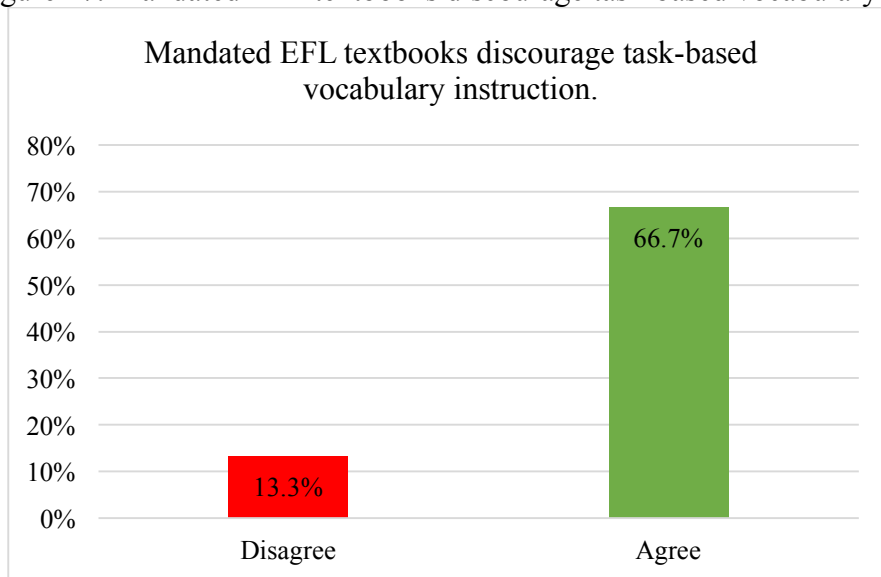
4.3.7   Teachers' TBLT pedagogical knowledge

Aside from teachers' content knowledge, their pedagogical knowledge plays a critical role in creating the success of a language class. Questions 20 and 21 aimed to uncover Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers' potential pedagogical difficulties associated with TBLT utilization. The result of question 21 shows that a considerable number of participating teachers (25%) confessed to hardly understanding how to employ the TBLT method to teach vocabulary. When it comes to the need to be retrained for TBLT application in vocabulary instruction, up to 66.7% expressed their wish to participate in a particularly designed training course in TBLT.

Figure 18. Teachers' TBLT pedagogical knowledge negatively impacts task-based vocabulary instruction
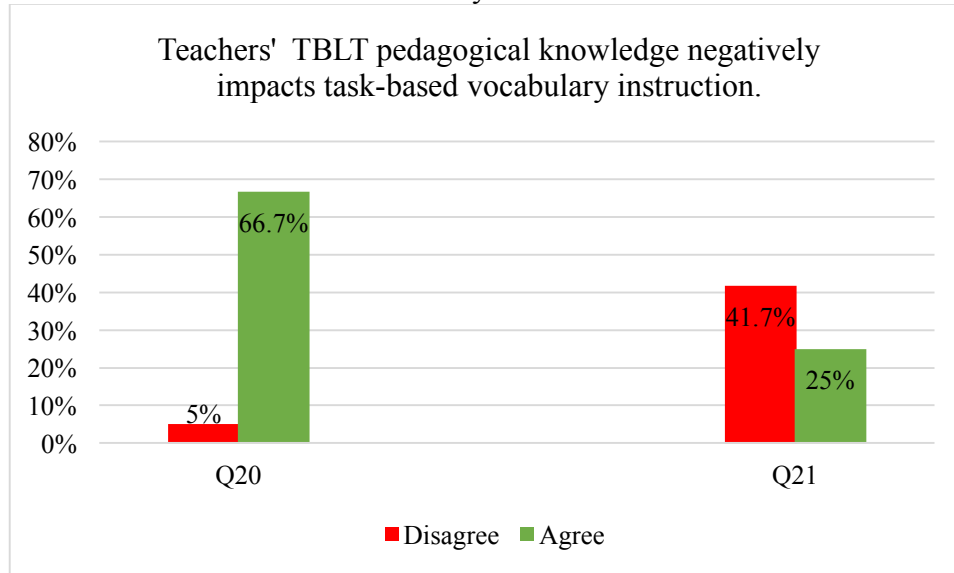
4.3.8 Students' learning attitude

Learners' attitude is of paramount importance to language acquisition. The positive attitude towards learning increases learners' possibilities for acquiring the target language. Conversely, when learners show their lack of willingness and engagement to join in learning activities, learning goals will be harder to be accomplished. In response to question 22, 55.3% of the participating teachers believed that their students were too familiar with the traditional vocabulary teaching. Their familiarity may result in their hesitance or refusal to take on the new learning style or method. The hypothesis is demonstrated with a significant number of the participating teachers (73.3%) who stated that their students hesitated to engage in meaningful, authentic, and communicative vocabulary instruction. It was added that even though some students were actively engaged in new teaching methods, a large number of students were not.

Figure 19. Learners' passive learning attitudes negatively affects task-based vocabulary instruction
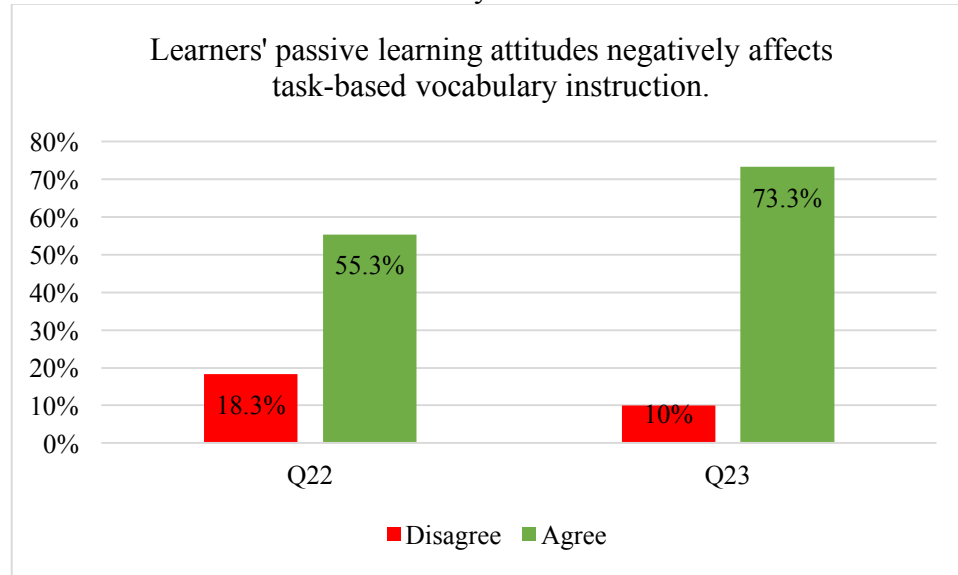
4.4   Overall perspective

The answer to the question of to what extent TBLT is used in vocabulary instruction by Vietnamese high-school teachers is summarized in the following chart. The aggregation of responses to the first 13 questions underscored that 53.6% of participating teachers either "often" or "always" employed TBLT to teach vocabulary. A considerable number of participating teachers (33.5%) acknowledged that they "sometimes" conducted vocabulary teaching based on TBLT. 13% revealed that their vocabulary teaching was not associated with TBLT.

Figure 20. The extent of TBLT practice in vocabulary instruction
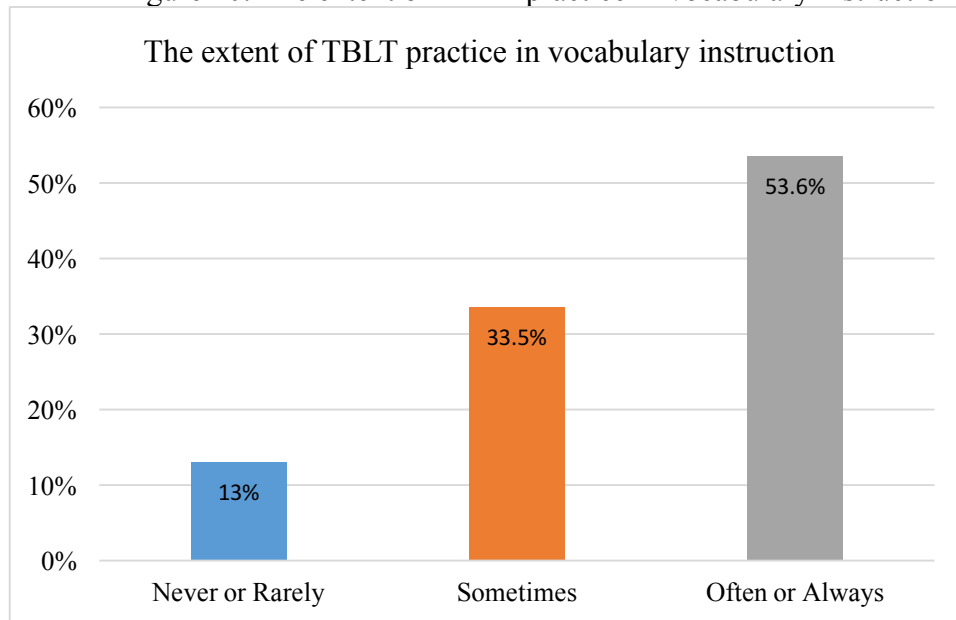
As previously noted, there is no significant correlation between teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction implementation and years of teaching experience. When it comes to potential difficulties Vietnamese high-school teachers may encounter, eight factors, which belong to two groups—internal and external—have been taken into consideration. Taken together, 66.2% of the participants agreed on the possible hindrances towards the task-based vocabulary instruction. Meanwhile, 13.7% did not view the mentioned factors as obstructions to the use of TBLT to teach vocabulary.

Figure 21. Teachers' belief about difficulties regarding the application of TBLT in vocabulary instruction

Teachers' belief about difficulties regarding the application of TBLT in vocabulary instruction
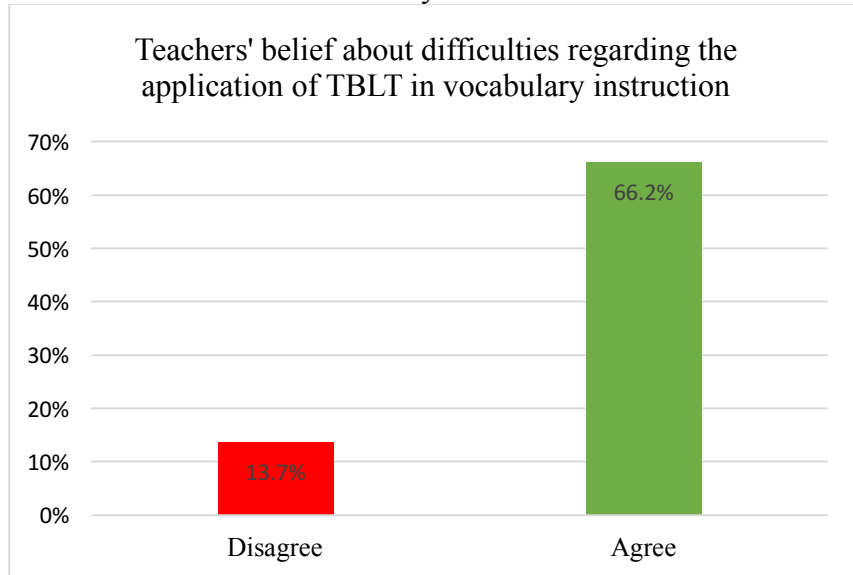
CHAPTER V   DISCUSSION

This research primarily aims to explore the extent of using TBLT in vocabulary instruction by Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers, and what factors may hinder teachers from using TBLT in the classroom. This chapter provides a deeper insight into the phenomenon of task-based vocabulary instruction in Vietnamese high-school EFL teaching and learning contexts. Specifically, the first section is a concise summary of answers to the research questions based on the research findings. The next two sections pinpoint how the research findings could contribute to improving the quality of EFL learning and teaching in Vietnam, and laying the foundation for further relevant research.

5.1   Responses to research questions

In response to the call of innovation in teaching, Vietnamese classroom-based teachers are encouraged to conduct their teaching practice based on TBLT methodology. The effects of TBLT on Vietnamese EFL learners' language competence development were recognized in a considerable body of research (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Canh, 2011; Yen, 2017; Trang, 2013). Possible impacts of TBLT on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition was also confirmed by many researchers (e.g., Sarani & Sahebi, 2012; Fallahrafie, Rahmany & Sadeghi, 2015; Tıkız, 2008; Kamalian, Soleimani & Safari, 2017; Ziyaeemehr, 2015). The shift from traditional teaching approaches to TBLT methodology in the Vietnamese EFL high-school classroom is attributed to a number of factors. The primary reason is both learners' and society's actual needs to learn English as an international language. Learners are expected to be able to put into practice what they were taught in the classroom. Task-based vocabulary instruction makes vocabulary

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itself an independent component of the language system. Learners can obtain vocabulary

and put it into practice right away. As mentioned in the literature, the role of vocabulary

in EFL learners' language competence development is critical. Thus, it is imperative to

select the appropriate methods of teaching vocabulary. Task-based vocabulary instruction

facilitates EFL learners' ability to use language not only for formal exams, but for daily

communication as well. Task-based vocabulary instruction is devoted to increasing

Vietnamese EFL learners' communication competence. Also, the integration of TBLT in

every single step of language classroom is congruent with the goals and policies of

foreign language teaching and learning in Vietnam.

Task-Based Language Teaching is a composite of task-related attributes. Nine

major attributes of TBLT were used as a scale to measure the extent of TBLT in

vocabulary instruction by Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers. According to the

research findings, 53.6% of the participating teachers "often" or "always" implemented

task-based vocabulary instruction. The number indicates that currently, TBLT has been

widely employed by Vietnamese EFL high-school teachers as one of the principal

language teaching discourses, particularly in vocabulary instruction. However, there

exists a variation in the appearance levels of different TBLT attributes, which may be

ascribed to particular EFL learning and teaching conditions in Vietnam. The meaning-

focusedness, the core of TBLT, was reportedly ensured by a majority of Vietnamese EFL

high-school teachers when teaching vocabulary. Following the trend of teaching English

for the need of communication, more and more teachers consider meaningful, authentic,

and communicative tasks a crucial part of vocabulary teaching. When meaning

negotiation is foregrounded in vocabulary instruction, learners are more likely to have

opportunities for communication and interaction. Additionally, important factors of TBLT method such as TBLT lesson framework, learners' available resources utilization, teachers' flexible roles and learners' central roles, task-completion priority, and outcome-based assessment are highlighted in vocabulary instruction by a large number of teachers.

However, four other TBLT aspects consisting of authenticity, engaging activities integration, 'gap'-based tasks, and clearly-defined non-linguistic outcome are less stressed, with the percentage value at around the 40s. Even though lexical lessons have been built upon the basis of meaning focus, how to make in-classroom communication authentic and meaningful is still a challenge to many teachers. Likewise, the use of engaging tasks is still a concern to classroom-based teachers. A lesson following TBLT model is expected to spark learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through interesting activities. However, the majority of teachers reported to find it hard to employ interesting activities in vocabulary instruction. The case takes place most often in the first step of vocabulary teaching when teachers mostly play the role of a giver. The results indicated that teachers tended to introduce new lexical items to learners directly instead of letting them figure out new words through interesting activities. Another reason behind the absence of engaging activities for vocabulary instruction is that vocabulary teaching is often regarded as a preparatory step for learners to deal with other tasks. Therefore, teachers reported to spend less time on vocabulary teaching. This lack of emphasis on vocabulary as an independent language component may hinder learners' language use ability later.

When it comes to the application of 'gap'-based tasks, participants' responses indicated that the meaning of 'gap'-based tasks was not clear. 'Gap'-based task used in

TBLT is not only limited to information-gap as stated by some participating teachers. 'Gap' in TBLT consists of three major types (information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap). The 'gap'-based activity design is diverse and dependent on teachers' capacity. Thus, the partial knowledge of what gap-based tasks mean could arguably explain the low report of their use. Finally, clear and non-linguistic goal-orientedness, a critical tenet of TBLT, appears controversial for these participants. Even though a quite large number of Vietnamese high-school teachers reported themselves as TBLT active users, the set goals and the assessment criteria are not completely consistent with TBLT nature. TBLT focuses on promoting EFL learners' language acquisition by using language as mediation to complete the set goals. In other words, learners' attention is drawn to clear and non-linguistic goals, which lessens learners' anxiety and pressure during new language absorption. Also, outcome-based assessment is matching with daily tasks completion purposes, the final goal of any language learning process. Based on participants' responses, one particular explanation for the conflict in goal and assessment orientation among task-based EFL classroom could mostly be related to exam-oriented teaching curriculum at the high-school level in Vietnam. Teachers can conduct their teaching based on TBLT; however, when assessment is involved, they choose to come back with the traditional ways to prepare students the best for the compulsory written tests.

A considerable number of the participating teachers stated that they either "sometimes" or "never" used TBLT to teach vocabulary. In the context of the increasing popularity and recognition of TBLT as the major discourse in EFL in Vietnam, the limited use or non-existence of TBLT in classrooms must be taken into consideration.

Among eight factors, which may interfere with teachers' task-based teaching practice, exam-based curriculum stands out as the biggest hindrance. Under the pressure of exam-driven teaching approach, teachers ground their teaching practice on serving examinations rather than authentic communication. As a consequence, the path for TBLT to be integrated into the classroom becomes narrower no matter how potentially effective it is. The outcome of TBLT is students' language acquisition through clear and non-linguistic goals, which is not matching with the current model of EFL examinations.

An additional factor discouraging Vietnamese high-school EFL teachers from the TBLT application is classroom time limitation. These teachers found it overwhelming to cover the content of mandated textbooks within 37 weeks, the designated amount of time for a school year at the high-school level in Vietnam, especially to serve the purpose of formal examinations. With three 45-minute English sessions per week applied for the set of English standard textbooks, teachers have no other choice but to manage to meet the deadline of content completion, and prepare students the best for tests and examinations. In this case, innovative language teaching methods like TBLT, which majorly focuses on promoting EFL learners' language use, is not the best choice for teachers.

Other factors including teachers' language proficiency, students' language proficiency, classroom settings, and mandated textbooks also came up as big concerns to the majority of teachers as for the application of TBLT. Particularly, even though TBLT is currently considered the main EFL teaching discourse in Vietnam, a considerable number of teachers confessed their lack of TBLT pedagogical knowledge. However effective a teaching method is, it will not bring the best result if practitioners do not completely understand and make meaning of it. In short, the mismatch between current

teaching conditions and TBLT-related factors is the root of teachers' reluctance to put TBLT into practice.

5.2   Implications for practical teaching

The current project was conducted to explore the practical application of TBLT in vocabulary instruction in Vietnam high-school EFL teaching contexts. The findings from classroom-based teachers' perspectives indicate that task-based vocabulary instruction has been conducted by quite a large number of teachers. However, it can be seen that teachers struggle to ground their vocabulary instruction on TBLT approach due to teaching context-related factors. In current Vietnamese EFL teaching and learning contexts, it is imperative to discover the beliefs and practices of classroom-based teachers regarding TBLT implementation in vocabulary teaching. Task-based vocabulary instruction means laying more profound foundation for Vietnamese EFL learners to develop their communication competence in the target language.

The research contributes to the existing literature on EFL teaching and learning, especially TBLT methodology. The research findings are expected to serve as a source of reference for classroom-based teachers, teacher trainers, material designers, and policy-makers in the field of EFL. The proposed frame of TBLT principles is useful for classroom-based teachers in orientating and evaluating vocabulary instruction. Reflection on their teaching must be significant to maximize the effectiveness of teaching method. The project is devoted to exploring the practice of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam. When TBLT is seen as the major EFL teaching discourse, an insight into how TBLT practice takes place at school is necessary. Teacher trainers, material designers, and

policy-makers can make use of the research findings for their particular purposes regarding EFL teaching and learning, particularly in Vietnamese contexts.

The research findings uncover the fact that even though TBLT is to some extent implemented in Vietnamese contexts, teachers must face multiple issues and constraints in their task-based teaching practice. When designing teaching materials, authors are supposed to relate their work with practical teaching and learning contexts in Vietnam. Similarly, policy makers need to have a deeper insight into what is taking place in EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam from classroom-based teachers' perspectives. As discovered in the research, it is obvious that there is a gap between the designated EFL teaching and learning approach and curriculum. TBLT cannot be effectively implemented if classrooms are still driven towards tests and examinations. There must be a consistency between policy makers and teacher trainers. TBLT must be considered a core part of teacher training or retraining programs when it has been considered the main teaching discourse at school.

5.3   Limitations and implications for further research

Even though colossal time and effort have been devoted to the research, limitations are inevitable. Due to the geographical distance, the study was unable to collect data with direct methods such as observations, interviews, and pretest-posttest designs, which are believed to generate more reliable results. Besides, the study would be more effective if more participants had been recruited. The purpose of the study is to gain an overall view of task-based vocabulary instruction by Vietnamese EFL teachers. Thus, a larger quantity of participants would increase the accuracy of the generalization.

The current study hopes to lay the foundation for further research regarding the use of TBLT in the classroom. Specifically, the first part of the study focusing on investigating the extent of teachers' TBLT practice can be used as a frame for further development of TBLT practice. However, as stated in the research, in general, classroom-based teachers are still very confused about how to employ TBLT in vocabulary instruction. Therefore, a qualitative inquiry regarding the confusion in implementing task-based vocabulary instruction could be helpful in identifying the obstacles in the effective implementation of TBLT.

CHAPTER VI   CONCLUSION

Vocabulary instruction, which often receives less attention in both practical teaching and in research, is the central point of the current study. In the era of teaching and learning English as an international language, learners' vocabulary acquisition is a substantial matter of concern. Language teaching method choice mostly falls in the hands of classroom-based teachers. Currently, TBLT has been considered the most innovative language teaching method, which fits the needs of teaching and learning the target language for communication. The combination of TBLT and vocabulary instruction is expected to boost learners' new language absorption process. However, in the field of EFL teaching and learning, the body of research on task-based vocabulary instruction is still modest. Particularly, in Vietnamese EFL teaching and learning contexts, hardly any study related to the topic of task-based vocabulary instruction has been conducted, even though TBLT has been stated as the major foreign language teaching discourse. Proper task-based vocabulary instruction is conducive to promoting learners' vocabulary understanding, retention, and retrieval.

Teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction evaluation, which is framed upon key TBLT principles, shows that quite a large number of Vietnamese EFL high-school teachers have associated their teaching vocabulary to TBLT. Teachers' years of teaching experience does not determine teachers' task-based vocabulary instruction practice. Teaching context-related factors confronting majority of teachers during task-based vocabulary instruction include teachers' limited language competency, exam-oriented curriculum, students' limited language competency, class time limitation, traditional classroom settings, mandated textbooks, teachers' limited TBLT pedagogical knowledge,

and students' passive learning attitude. Among the reported constraints, the exam-driven curriculum is reported to pose the most serious effects on teachers' teaching approach. Exploring the practical implementation of TBLT in vocabulary instruction, and potential challenges in Vietnamese EFL teaching and learning context, is of crucial importance. The research findings are expected to be useful for classroom-based teachers, teacher trainers, material designers, and policymakers in their professional practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval letter

FIU | FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To:	Dr. Eric Dwyer
CC:	File
From:	Maria Melendez-Vargas, MIBA, IRB Coordinator
Date:	January 3, 2018
Protocol Title:	"Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Task-based Approach to Vocabulary Instruction in Secondary School English as a Foreign Language Class"

The Florida International University Office of Research Integrity has reviewed your research study for the use of human subjects and deemed it Exempt under 46.101(b) (1) of the Common Rule via the **Exempt Review** process.

IRB Protocol Exemption #: IRB-18-0003   **IRB Exemption Date:** 01/03/18
TOPAZ Reference #: 106304

As a requirement of IRB Exemption you are required to:

1) Submit an Event Form and provide immediate notification of:
   - Any additions or changes in the procedures involving human subjects.
   - Every serious or unusual or unanticipated adverse event as well as problems with the rights or welfare of the human subjects.
2) Submit a Project Completion Report Form when the study is finished or discontinued.

Special Conditions:

For further information, you may visit the IRB website at http://research.fiu.edu/irb.

MMV/em

Appendix B: Study Description

This is a mixed-methods study of Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perspective of using Task-based language teaching method in teaching vocabulary.

Researcher:

Dung Nguyen, a master student in Foreign Language Education at Florida International University.

Research purpose and contribution:

The purpose of this study is to generalize Vietnamese classroom-based EFL teachers' perception and practice of Task-based language teaching (TBLT) in teaching vocabulary. The current study aims to obtain an understanding of how EFL vocabulary instruction takes place in Vietnamese high-school contexts and to what extent TBLT is exploited for this integral part of language teaching. The research contributes to the literature of vocabulary instruction in the field of teaching English as a foreign/second language, particularly in such foreign language teaching environments as Vietnam where learners often confront themselves with various impeding factors in their journey of the target language cultivation.

Subject recruitment:

I am seeking the participation of 60 high-school EFL teachers from different schools in Vietnam. Participants who have been qualified to be teaching English as a foreign language at a high school in Vietnam are invited to be part of the research. Participants can be responsible for teaching students of the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade. Participants are expected to demonstrate an interest in employing Task-based language teaching method in vocabulary instruction.

Procedure:

Your participation would take place in the spring term with one online survey. You are advised to complete the general information part and research participation confirmation before coming to the next part.

The questionnaire consists of 23 statements regarding the belief and practice of using TBLT in teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Based on your teaching experience as an EFL high-school teacher in Vietnam, please tick the circle ($\sqrt{}$) that best corresponds to your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Then please briefly and clearly explain your answers.

For your most convenience, both Vietnamese and English are provided for each statement.

After submitting your questionnaire, you can edit your responses if you would like, and see the summary of the responses from all other participants without their personal information.

Benefits:

There is no direct benefit to you for your participation. However, your participation in this study is a significant contribution to the enrichment of foreign language education knowledge of the world and especially in Vietnam EFL teaching and learning context. Through the participation in the project, participants must be more aware of their current practice of teaching vocabulary and how to incorporate TBLT into their vocabulary instruction for the sake of EFL learners' communicative competence development.

Risks to participants:

There are no perceived risks in participating in the study. Participation is strictly voluntary. Your participation will be anonymous. You may decline to participate. You may withdraw at any time during the research study.

Confidentiality of study data:

Results will be reported in the aggregate, and no individual participants will be identified. All electronic data will be kept on my personal computer only until my thesis is approved. The emails including contact information will be kept completely private, and all of none of your responses will be revealed.

If I may receive confirmation of your participation within seven days from the invitation email, I will be grateful.

Contact information:

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me, Dung Nguyen at (786) 775-2193 or via email at dnguy042@fiu.edu or my Major Professor, Dr. Eric Dwyer at (305) 348-2078 or via email at dwyere@fiu.edu.

Thank you for considering participating in my study.

Sincerely,

Dung Nguyen

Appendix C: Participant Invitation Email

Vietnamese Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Task-based Approach to Vocabulary Instruction in Secondary School English as a Foreign Language Classrooms

Thank you for your graciousness to take part in this research project!

Your participation is tremendously significant to the success of this project.

The purpose of this study is to investigate Vietnamese EFL high-school teachers' belief and practice of using Task-Based Language Teaching method in teaching vocabulary in order to improve EFL learners' communicative competence. This questionnaire should only take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Once you complete the survey, save the answers and send back to me at dnguy042@fiu.edu. You will receive a survey completion confirmation email upon your submission. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

Please return on or before Saturday, January 20, 2018.