Teachers' Beliefs and Practices: The Implementation of TBLT in Indonesian Higher Education

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a trend in numerous countries. TBLT provides a contextualized and student-oriented approach in the EFL classroom that enables students to develop language skills that are relevant to a variety of real-life contexts. However, there is limited research on TBLT beliefs among teachers in Indonesian higher education. This study explored at two English language teacher beliefs concerning the implementation of TBLT in higher education in Indonesia, as well as the contextual factors that impact their beliefs. Qualitative research using a narrative inquiry approach was used to provide descriptive data about the teachers' experiences in task-based language teaching (TBLT). Data were collected through semi-structured online interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Based on the data analysis, it emerged that teachers' beliefs are instrumental as they influence their teaching approaches and practices related to TBLT. Teachers who believe in the effectiveness of TBLT tend to be more active in implementing it in their teaching. The results also showed a gap between teachers' beliefs and knowledge about TBLT. In addition, contextual factors such as curriculum, social relationships between teachers and students, and institutional support also influence the successful implementation of TBLT in EFL classrooms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The trend of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has aroused in a number of countries (East, 2019). Task-Based Language Teaching is a teaching approach which highlights on context and meaning (Long, 2015). TBLT has one instructional paradigm: assignment. It is a goal-oriented activity where the learners attempt to achieve an outcome while communicating in the target language (Liu et al., 2021). According to Chua and Lin (2020), TBLT provides students an opportunity to be exposed to real-life situation in language classes where communicative competence is the main objective of the language teaching. The implementation of TBLT has been seen as an effective approach to boosting EFL learners by meaningful activities and performing tasks to enhance their communicative competencies in diverse contextual circumstances (Chua & Lin 2020). Moreover, TBLT has been beneficial in enhancing students'

language learning engagement and motivation in learning (Widodo, 2015; Ji & Pham, 2020; Chua & Lin 2020). The successful implementation of TBLT cannot be separated from the role of the teacher. The teacher has an essential role in introducing TBLT in the classroom. The Task-Based Language Teaching approach requires teachers to design contents and assignments based on the syllabus and implementing in the language class (Duong & Nguyen, 2021).

In recent decades, TBLT has becoming increasingly popular among higher education levels in Indonesia, considering that this approach is in line with the latest curriculum framework for tertiary institutions which is Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI) or Indonesia Qualification Framework (Rohmah, 2017; Latif, 2017; Setiawan, 2020). KKNI is a competency qualification framework which is expected to equalize and integrate education and job training as well as experience to recognize work competencies in various sectors (Solikhah, 2022; Rohmah, 2017). The implementation of KKNI is in language education is to achieve communicative competence (Latif, 2017; Rohmah, 2017). Communicative competence refers to a person's ability to communicate effectively in real situations using a particular language. It involves understanding and applying various aspects of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, intonation, and interpersonal skills, to facilitate successful communication. Communicative competence also includes understanding the social, cultural, and situational context in which communication takes place, so the messages are delivered appropriately. Therefore, to achieve this competence, a number of English teachers in Indonesia adopt the TBLT method in the language classroom as TBLT emphasizes on developing students' communicative skills through active participation in authentic communicative tasks. It includes a variety of activities that allow students to use the language in meaningful communicative situations. This is in line also with the KKNI objectives which is to prepare individuals to be able to participate in social and professional activities by using English effectively (Mulyadi et al., 2021; Ramadhan et al., 2021; Samsudin & Sukarismanti, 2021).

Although TBLT has become familiar at the tertiary level in Indonesia, there's still little research conducted on teachers' beliefs on the implementation of TBLT in the KKNI framework curriculum. Teachers' belief is one of the essential things in the teaching process. Borg (2017) mentions that teachers' beliefs refer in large part to their beliefs and perceptions that are relevant to their teaching practice. Several factors form teachers' beliefs; the teacher's experience while studying, professional coursework, contextual factors (usually sourced from external factors such as the environment, prior teaching approach, curriculum), and teaching practices in classroom (Borg, 2017). Teachers' beliefs greatly influence their decision-making regarding the teaching approach adapted to learning. According to Couper in 2017, which conducted research on teachers' beliefs on teaching pronunciation, he utters that teachers' beliefs determine what method or teaching approach the teacher uses in teaching. Likewise, the implementation of TBLT is also very dependent on the beliefs of the teacher.

Based on research by Lam et al. (2021), who investigated lecturers' beliefs regarding TBLT proved that the length of teaching period does not guarantee that the lecturer understands the concept and able consistently in applying TBLT, but instead the lecturers' belief and knowledge regarding TBLT makes them consistent with this approach. Furthermore, in Liu and Ren's research in 2021, the results showed that teacher beliefs on the prior teaching approach had an effect on the implementation of TBLT. Moreover, the findings from Peng and Pyper (2021) show that the curriculum also has an impact on teachers' beliefs in implementing TBLT. Teacher belief has an impactful effect in classroom practice (Borg, 2017; Duong & Nguyen, 2021; Xu & Fan, 2022). In addition, previous studies have shown that TBLT is not a one-size-fits-all method. The success of this method depends on various local contextual factors in its application (Bao and Du, 2015).

Thus, this research was conducted as a preliminary exploration to see how teachers practice TBLT in accordance with their beliefs or vice versa, which can later become the basis of learning for the implementation of TBLT in the future. This study attempted to answer the following two questions:

1. What beliefs do the teachers hold regarding TBLT that are congruent with the KKNI curriculum framework?
2. What are the contextual factors that affect the implementation of TBLT?

2. METHODS

This research was designed using a qualitative case study approach. According to Nassaji (2020), qualitative research aims to explore a phenomenon or issue from the point of view of different subjects. Narrative inquiry is adopted as a data collection method (Sonday et al., 2020), and it focuses on exploring a phenomenon or event through stories or narratives provided by research participants. Empirical data was collected through online semi-structured interviews. The choice of this platform was made due to the time constrains. The questions were adapted from Xu and Fan's (2022) research by referring to related literature on TBLT.

Questions for interviews adapted from Xu & Fan (2022).
1. What is your view of TBLT as new approach for EFL class?
2. Have you applied Task-Based Language Teaching method in your classroom?
3. What assignments do you usually give to the students? And how do you adapt it as the language assessment? (e.g: written assignment to assess writing, presentation to assess speaking, etc)
4. What difficulties or challenges did you encounter when you used Task-Based Language Teaching in the classroom?
5. How do you cope with the difficulties or challenges of implementing Task-Based Language Teaching?
6. Is there professional development support in the field of Task-Based Language Teaching provided by institutions or the government?
7. How is your perception of Task-Based Language Teaching? Do you think this method is effective in EFL class?

This preliminary research was conducted at a public university in Pekanbaru which is the capital city of Riau Province in Indonesia. The research only chose the English study program. The data for this study gained from two English education lecturers. Each teachers teaches different subjects in two different classes with 30 students of each class. The interviewees were selected using a purposive sampling technique. These two teachers met the requirements because (1) teaching experiences are more than 5 years, (2) the educational backgrounds are related to English education, (3) the samples were willing to be interviewed repeatedly; and (4) they are interested in TBLT and apply it in class. The following table (Table 1) shows the demographic characteristics of two English teachers as the participants. The sources are coded as EL and ZH to maintain participant anonymity.

The data analysis process was conducted using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved coding the teacher interview transcripts to identify and explore the main themes that emerged from the data. This approach enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insights into teachers' views and experiences related to the implementation of TBLT in language learning contexts.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics of Participants	EL	ZH
Gender	Female	Male
Age	58	33
Educational Background	Ph.D in TESL	Master's Degree in TESOL
Teaching Experience	32 years	9 years
Subject Taught in Class	Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching	English for Business

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Findings*

3.1.1 Teachers' Beliefs in Implementing TBLT in the Classroom.

Teachers' beliefs are a crucial aspect of the teaching process, especially when implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Both teachers have similar beliefs that TBLT has the potential to improve language use in the EFL classroom. They believed that tasks should focus more on meaning rather than language form. In addition, both agreed that tasks should be designed to increase interaction in order to achieve the objectives of the KKNI, particularly in communicative skills. The EL saw that TBLT could play an important role in improving interaction among students, provided it was implemented with the right methods. As EL said,

> *"TBLT can improve student interaction in the classroom. However, this depends on the lecturer's initiative. Of course, this execution requires lesson planning using TBLT methods and KKNI curriculum methods." (EL)*

Meanwhile, the second teacher had a strong belief that TBLT could improve social interaction skills among peers, which in turn would increase their confidence level. The second teacher also stated that TBLT is a different form of teaching from conventional tests conducted on paper. As expressed by the second teacher, the TBLT approach brings an element of direct interaction in the classroom, differentiating it from traditional teaching methods that focus more on grammatical knowledge.

> *"With TBLT, I can assess my students' English skills, one of which is speaking skills during presentations." (ZH)*

Although both teachers had confidence in the TBLT method, they encountered limited knowledge related to this task and approach. Regarding their knowledge of TBLT, both teachers only had a basic understanding of the concept of 'tasks that interest students to learn' and applied it as the main method in classroom teaching. However, neither teacher had yet deepened their understanding of the basic concepts of TBLT. They believed that applying TBLT could arouse students' interest in learning English and increase their participation level. EL and ZH both voiced this belief,

> *"TBLT is effective as long as we continue improving, evaluating, and getting feedback from the tasks given to the students." (EL)*

> *"TBLT makes the class interactive accompanied with certain classroom management strategies." (ZH)*

To overcome their limited knowledge, both teachers decided to take the initiative to improve their understanding of TBLT. They recognized the need for additional efforts to address the gaps in their understanding. Although not all the sources they studied in depth focused on TBLT explicitly, they still had relevance to the concept of TBLT. EL chose to hone her knowledge by reading various articles as a form of self-learning. Meanwhile, ZH decided to take further steps by attending workshops related to TBLT.

> *"I read some articles regarding TBLT. I also adjust the ideas I get so that I can implement them in class." (EL)*

"Usually, I attended workshop or seminar from the Tanoto Foundation. I also took part in a professional development course by Michigan State Uni, but this was about teaching literacy, not assignment-based language teaching. But I did get some inspiration to design assignments based on this course." (ZH)

3.1.2 Contextual Factors Influence in Implementing TBLT

Through the interviews, it was found that there are several factors that influence teachers' beliefs and practices in implementing TBLT in Indonesian higher education institutions (see Figure 1). There were three main themes that emerged from the interviews with the teachers, namely the supporting tools, social interaction, and support from the institution.
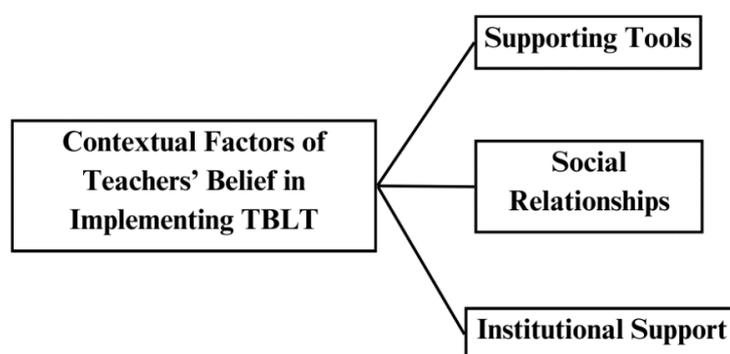

Figure 1. Contextual Factors of Teachers' Belief in Implementing TBLT in Indonesian High Institution

The first factor is the supporting tools. Teachers utilized personal reference books and academic literature such as articles when implementing TBLT. However, these tools did not significantly contribute to the implementation of TBLT and were not aligned with the KKNI competencies that emphasize outcome-based education. They stated that they only utilize these tools as references in the learning process. They took the initiative to find solutions by designing their own assignments that prioritized KKNI competencies and considered students' needs. In addition, the teachers also took advantage of other sources such as textbooks and the internet. As said by EL and ZH said,

"I prefer to design activities such as writing reflection from every meeting to assess writing ability. Sometimes, I do group presentations to assess comprehension (in content classes) and enhance their speaking skills along with self-confidence." (EL)

"I often ask them to do business presentations to assess speaking." (ZH)

The second factor is social relationships. In this study, EL and ZH talked about how students respond to their teaching methods. EL revealed that one of the challenges was the lack of student engagement when starting the learning material. EL also found a solution to this problem, as she explained,

Problem:

"Sometimes students can follow the lesson well and enthusiastically. But sometimes they also have difficulty doing assignments especially regarding to grammar in writing." (EL)

Solution:
"While for the content subject, I offer quizzes at some meetings, I also offer some points for those who ask questions and answer questions. Usually, they can get 1 point for those who ask questions and 2 points for those who can answer questions. By doing this, they will be more motivated to comprehend the materials." (EL)

ZH also experienced difficulties related to student engagement, as she expressed, "There are times when students are reluctant to perform in front of the class." Therefore, ZH decided to utilize the online rotating wheel feature to determine who would lead the presentation in front of the class. In this way, students became more interested in participating in the learning process. Furthermore, social interactions with colleagues also influence TBLT implementation. Teachers communicate and discuss with their peers. This not only helps them in designing learning tasks but also improves their understanding of the TBLT concept as a whole. However, both of the teachers acknowledged that discussions on TBLT are rare among teachers.

The last factor is support from the institution. When asked if there were any specific professional development programs in Task-Based Language Teaching provided by the institution or the government, they stated that there was no specific training provided by either the institution or the government. Here, EL and ZH had different experiences.

"But there are some supports for professional development in language teaching in general." (EL)

"Usually, one to three from one study program like the one I participated in from Tanoto Foundation. I also took part in a professional development course by Michigan State Uni, but it's about literacy instruction not task-based language teaching." (ZH)

3.2. Discussion

In answering the first research question, the researcher found that teachers held the belief that tasks in the TBLT approach should emphasize on language functions rather than on formal aspects of language knowledge. They agreed that the tasks should be designed as a means for students to use language in real-life contexts, rather than simply only for evaluation or examination purposes. They preferred to create tasks that provided opportunities for students to interact actively in communicative situations. The lecturers acknowledged that students were very engaged in the EFL classes that implemented TBLT. Saragih et al. (2022) also found that the use of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can increase students' engagement in the English learning process. TBLT is known to prioritize learning through challenging and real situation-oriented tasks, allowing students to actively engage in language use in relevant and meaningful contexts. Thus, this approach encourages students' active participation in learning, which in turn can improve their English skills. Through well-designed tasks in TBLT, students have the opportunity to actively use English and practice their communication skills in real-life situations, which can naturally improve their overall English proficiency. Although TBLT emphasizes student-centred, a strong belief in TBLT shapes lecturers to view their role as facilitators or guides in directing students to complete authentic tasks (Van den Branden, 2016).

Apparently, both teachers experienced gaps in their understanding of TBLT due to the lack of training related to TBLT. Lack of adequate knowledge about TBLT has been identified as one of the main barriers in adopting this approach (Hasnain & Halder, 2023). Both teachers continued to improve their understanding of this approach by reading related literature and collaborating with colleagues. Training on TBLT is essential as teachers' lack of understanding of TBLT, both theoretically and

practically. This condition can significantly affect their belief in the approach (Xu & Fan, 2022). Teachers who are less informed about TBLT may be more inclined to use more conventional or traditional teaching approaches that they are already familiar with (Maulana, 2021). They may feel more comfortable with traditional teaching methods rather than taking risks with approaches they do not fully understand. Therefore, this limited understanding may hinder teachers' efforts to integrate TBLT into their teaching practices with optimal confidence and effectiveness.

Furthermore, TBLT is not only applicable in higher education. Through the literature review, it is evident that TBLT can also be successfully implemented at the secondary school level. Several studies have shown that TBLT is effective in improving students' English proficiency in secondary schools (Prianty et al., 2021; Huang & Nisbet, 2020). Therefore, belief in TBLT should be instilled in all English teachers, not just those who teach in higher education. By integrating the TBLT method into the curriculum and teaching practices at all levels of education, English teachers can create a more engaging, meaningful, and effective learning environment for students (Maulana, 2021).

To answer the second research question, the researcher found that contextual factors influence teachers' beliefs in the context of TBLT implementation. Contextual factors are supporting tools, social relationships, and institutional support influence teachers' beliefs. These factors provide further information about the teacher's responses and actions in carrying out TBLT in the learning process. For supporting tools, it can be seen that the supporting tools which had been utilized by the teachers were books and scientific papers. The teaching materials used have not been aligned with the objectives of the KKNI; communicative competence. To overcome this concern, the two teachers designed assignments according to the objectives of the KKNI and the needs of the students. This is in line with the research of Xu and Fan (2022), which shows that the role of supporting tools is influential in the implementation of TBLT.

In the social relationship, this study investigated at the attitude of students towards the implementation of TBLT and peer discussion among teachers. Through the results of interviews, students were a positive attitude toward the implementation of the TBLT method. This is in line with the research by Sholeh et al. (2021), in which the analysis of items 7 to 15 revealed that Indonesian EFL learners had a good perception regarding the performance of language classrooms. The positive attitude of students towards implementing TBLT generates motivation where student motivation plays an important role in class and can determine the success of TBLT (Tavakoli, 2019). Nonetheless, it is important to note that students' positive attitudes do not directly guarantee the successful implementation of TBLT. It is worth highlighting that students' cultural and environmental differences can be an obstacle to the effectiveness of TBLT. Therefore, adaptation and tailoring to students' needs remain vital in effectively implementing this method (Van den Branden, 2016).

The research findings also indicate that although learners were generally in favor of TBLT, they were still not confident in terms of making mistakes in grammar and content classes. This was where the teacher's role was as a facilitator who guided and motivated students in working on tasks (Van den Branden, 2016). Furthermore, peer discussions with colleagues regarding TBLT also influenced the implementation of TBLT. This discussion can help teachers deepen concepts and expand ideas about self-design toward the task. Nevertheless, based on the data, discussions about TBLT were rarely carried out among teachers.

Finally, institutional support also affects teachers' institutions in implementing TBLT. As revealed by the data, the institution did not provide specific training on TBLT. The institution only provided training for professional development in general language teaching. However, there were teacher initiatives to develop their skills in implementing TBLT by attending training outside the institution related to TBLT specifically in literacy teaching. The role of institutional support in encouraging the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is often very important but often under-explored. The lack of specialized training on TBLT within educational institutions can have a negative impact on teachers' ability to implement this approach effectively. In addition to providing training and professional development, the stakeholders can also develop or provide resources and teaching

materials that are appropriate to the TBLT approach. These can include examples of communicative tasks, well-designed lesson plans, and interactive and relevant learning materials. By providing adequate training, support and resources, institutions can play an important role in helping teachers develop their ability to effectively implement Task-Based Language Teaching in their classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate teachers' beliefs and contextual factors that influence the implementation of TBLT in Indonesian universities. The findings showed a gap between teachers' beliefs and knowledge about TBLT. One strategy that can be adopted is to facilitate teachers in developing a deeper understanding of TBLT through organizing professional development workshops related to TBLT. In addition, three contextual factors that influenced the implementation of TBLT were identified, namely the availability of supporting tools, social relationships, and institutional support. Therefore, it is important to provide adequate support to foster a culture of collaborative teaching, which will encourage social interaction between peers. It is crucial to recognize that this study has limitations. First, this study is a preliminary study which requires further study. Secondly, the limitation of the study is the limited sample size of two lecturers. A limited sample may lead to the unrepresentativeness of variations in the overall population. As such, this study may not fully reflect the diverse views or experiences of a larger group. Thirdly, this study used qualitative research methods only.

Therefore, for future research, it is necessary to expand the sample size from different teacher demographics, different institutions, and diverse cultures to obtain broader and more compact data. In addition, future research may consider using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methods make it possible to collect data from multiple sources, including both numbers and statistics (quantitative), descriptive information, and in-depth understanding (qualitative). This increases the depth and diversity of data obtained, enriching analysis and interpretation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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