

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Indonesian High Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates Indonesian senior high school English teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to develop students' speaking skills. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research involved six teachers from public high schools in Lombok, who were selected purposively. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and then analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings reveal that although teachers hold positive beliefs toward TBLT, most implement it only partially, often omitting pre- and post-task stages. The gap between beliefs and practices is influenced by contextual factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, curriculum constraints, and lack of TBLT-specific training. Teachers with higher professional agency and access to development opportunities demonstrated stronger alignment between belief and practice. These findings underscore the importance of localized, continuous professional development and institutional support to enable more faithful TBLT implementation. This study contributes to both theoretical discourse on teacher cognition and practical efforts to enhance speaking instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Task-Based Language Teaching; Teacher Beliefs; Classroom Practices; Speaking Instruction; Indonesian EFL Context*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are increasingly regarded as a crucial element of communicative competence in the context of globalization. This is particularly true in Indonesian high schools, where mastering speaking is pivotal for academic success and securing future opportunities in international settings, higher education, and the global job market (Rahimi, 2024). As the world becomes more interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively in English plays a vital role in shaping students' futures, making the development of speaking skills an essential component of language education. However, despite the growing recognition of speaking as a key skill, many Indonesian students still face significant challenges in speaking fluently, confidently, and spontaneously. This is often due to traditional, grammar-centered teaching methods and teacher-

dominated classroom settings, which limit opportunities for genuine communicative practice (Islami & Senom, 2024). (Negewo et al., 2023) in these contexts, students rarely engage in real-life language use, which is crucial for language acquisition and fluency.

To address these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a more effective pedagogical approach, focusing on the completion of meaningful tasks that require authentic language use. TBLT promotes interaction, fluency, and communicative competence by emphasizing language use in context rather than mere form-focused exercises (Ellis, 2009) (Siddiqui & Winke, 2023). This approach has been integrated into Indonesian education reforms, such as the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) and the Merdeka Curriculum, both of which emphasize student-centered learning and active participation. However, despite its potential, the implementation of TBLT in many Indonesian high schools has been inconsistent, often due to inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and a disconnect between teachers' beliefs and the practical realities of the classroom (Sholeh et al., 2021). These discrepancies highlight the need to explore how teachers perceive and apply TBLT in their classrooms.

Teacher beliefs, which encompass educators' personal values, assumptions, and interpretations about teaching and learning, significantly shape their pedagogical decisions. These beliefs influence how teachers approach curriculum frameworks such as TBLT, determining whether they implement them as intended or adapt them to fit their own perspectives and classroom constraints (Zheng & Borg, 2014). Notably, research has shown that there is often a gap between what teachers believe is best for language learning and what they do in practice. Even when teachers express support for communicative, student-centered methods, practical constraints such as time limitations, student readiness, and institutional pressures often lead them to revert to more traditional, teacher-led approaches (Gandeel, 2016). This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding the alignment or lack thereof between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices.

While much research on teacher cognition and TBLT has been conducted in tertiary education and private language schools, high school settings, particularly public schools in Indonesia, remain underexplored. These settings present unique challenges that may differ significantly from those faced by teachers in other educational contexts, such as larger class sizes, diverse student abilities, and limited access to teaching resources (Dao et al., 2024) ; (Thi et al., 2024). Thus, more research is needed to understand how Indonesian high school teachers interpret and implement TBLT, especially in public schools, to better tailor interventions and professional development programs. Studies from neighboring countries such as Nepal (Neupane, 2024) and Bangladesh (Siddiqui & Winke, 2023) Provide valuable insights into the role of institutional support and professional development in the successful implementation of TBLT at the high school level. However, many of these studies focus primarily on self-reported data, such as teacher questionnaires, without triangulating these findings with classroom observations or interviews, which may overlook the complexities of actual classroom practices (Nayak & Patel, 2023).

In Indonesia, local research has indicated that TBLT can lead to improvements in students' speaking skills when teachers are confident in the approach and receive adequate pedagogical support (Halim et al., 2024) ; (Khan et al., 2023). However, these studies are often limited in scope and sample size, highlighting the need for more comprehensive research. To advance the field, it is essential to explore how Indonesian high school teachers perceive and implement TBLT in their classrooms. By examining the alignment between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices, this research can offer valuable insights into how TBLT can be more effectively integrated into high school curricula, particularly in language instruction. Furthermore, such studies can help bridge the gap between national language policies and classroom realities, ensuring that innovations like TBLT are not merely adopted in theory but also effectively practiced in schools.

Given Indonesia's current educational reforms promoting "active learning" and "student autonomy," this research is timely and pertinent. Studying teachers' perspectives can inform future curriculum development and professional development programs that align more closely with teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on teacher beliefs and language pedagogy in EFL contexts, while practically, it provides recommendations for improving speaking instruction through a more grounded and belief-aligned implementation of TBLT in secondary education.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the beliefs and classroom practices of Indonesian high school English teachers regarding the use of TBLT in teaching speaking. Specifically, the study aims to identify areas of alignment and mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices and to examine the factors that influence effective implementation. The findings of this research will contribute to informing future policies, teacher training programs, and instructional design in the Indonesian EFL context.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore English teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in speaking instruction. This approach allowed the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of pedagogical perceptions and behaviors in a natural classroom setting (Creswell, 2014). The participants included six English teachers from three public senior high schools in Lombok, selected through purposive sampling. Selection criteria included a minimum of five years of teaching experience, active involvement in teaching speaking skills, and familiarity with TBLT principles (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis (lesson plans and instructional materials). Triangulation across these sources enhanced the credibility and validity of the findings. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-step framework, from coding to reporting. Member checking was conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of the data interpretations.

This methodology was designed to generate contextually grounded insights into how teachers' beliefs align or diverge from their classroom practices in applying TBLT in Indonesian high school settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Teachers' Beliefs Toward the Implementation of TBLT

Interview data revealed that most teachers expressed positive beliefs about the use of *Task-Based Language Teaching* (TBLT) in teaching speaking skills. They believed that TBLT encouraged students to participate actively, helped build speaking fluency, and made language use more authentic. One teacher explained, "*TBLT allows my students to speak more naturally because they focus on solving tasks rather than being afraid of grammar mistakes.*"

Despite their positive attitudes, teachers' understanding of TBLT varied. Some teachers equated TBLT with basic group discussions or class presentations without incorporating the complete structure of TBLT, such as the *pre-task*, *task cycle*, and *post-task* phases. This indicates a conceptual gap between supportive beliefs and practical understanding of the method. (Fu, 2022) and (Siddiqui & Winke, 2023) have noted similar findings in Asian EFL contexts, where teachers often adopt TBLT partially due to limited professional development and conceptual clarity.

2. Classroom Practices in Implementing TBLT

Classroom observation revealed that only a few teachers applied TBLT systematically. Two teachers implemented all three stages, pre-task, task cycle, and post-task consistently, while the others primarily focused on the task itself without adequate scaffolding or reflective follow up. These partial applications of TBLT reduce the intended communicative and learner-centered benefits of the approach.

Analysis of lesson plans supported the observation results. While some documents mentioned tasks or even the term “TBLT,” most lacked a structured sequence aligned with task-based principles. Teachers admitted that they designed tasks for speaking, but often omitted essential elements such as modeling or post-task feedback. This partial execution demonstrates a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice, as also discussed by (Gandeel, 2016) and (Zheng & Borg, 2014).

3. The Belief Practice Gap

A significant finding of this study is the presence of a belief-practice gap. Although teachers reported favorable attitudes toward TBLT, their classroom practices did not always reflect these beliefs. Some teachers stated that while they wanted to apply TBLT, they were constrained by limited time, large class sizes, and the varying proficiency levels of students. This finding is consistent with Borg (2003), who emphasized that teacher beliefs are often mediated by contextual and institutional factors.

Teachers who had received specific training in TBLT showed a higher level of implementation fidelity. Those without training tended to rely on conventional methods or adapted TBLT superficially, labeling speaking tasks as “communicative” while lacking adherence to the methodological principles of TBLT. This suggests that professional development is essential to bridge the gap between beliefs and actual teaching practice.

4. Contextual Factors Affecting TBLT Implementation

Several contextual factors were found to influence the implementation of TBLT in the classroom, including large class sizes, limited instructional time, students' readiness, and insufficient support from the school environment. Teachers reported that managing large classes with a task-based approach required more complex strategies and extended time, particularly during the reflection and evaluation stages.

In addition, differences in students' motivation and proficiency levels within a single classroom posed further challenges. To cope with these issues, some teachers blended elements of TBLT with traditional teaching methods to ensure that instruction remained aligned with curriculum objectives. Such adaptations are consistent with findings by (Thi et al., 2024) and (Khan et al., 2023), who observed that EFL teachers often adopt hybrid strategies as a practical response to real classroom conditions.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this study highlight the complex interplay between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices in implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Indonesian high schools. While teachers generally held favorable views toward TBLT's potential to foster communication and learner engagement, its application in daily instruction was often partial or modified to suit local conditions. One significant finding was the contextual limitation experienced by many teachers, including large class sizes, limited contact hours, and diverse student

proficiency levels. These constraints are echoed in recent studies. For example, (Liu & Ren, 2024) found that Chinese EFL teachers similarly adapted TBLT due to institutional limitations and students' reluctance to participate in communicative tasks. In our study, such adaptations included combining TBLT elements with grammar-based instruction or skipping reflection stages to meet syllabus demands.

Another critical factor shaping implementation was teacher agency. Teachers with greater confidence and autonomy were more likely to make reflective, student-centered adaptations of TBLT. This aligns with (Xu & Fan, 2022), who documented that teachers with strong professional agency were better able to mediate between their beliefs and the practical realities of their teaching environments. This suggests that TBLT implementation depends not only on methodological knowledge but also on empowering teacher identity. Moreover, the role of professional development and institutional support remains pivotal. Teachers who had attended TBLT-focused workshops or were part of professional learning communities demonstrated more coherent application of the approach. (Bryfonski, 2024) Noted that novice teachers who underwent structured TBLT training programs reported greater ease in managing tasks and aligning them with assessment outcomes. This reinforces the idea that professional development must go beyond theoretical exposure and offer contextualized, practical scaffolding.

In terms of cultural and systemic influences, several participants expressed concerns about curriculum rigidity and high-stakes examinations. As noted by (Nguyen et al., 2021) University lecturers in Southeast Asia often perceive a misalignment between TBLT principles and exam-driven educational systems. Our findings confirm that teachers often adapt or limit the use of tasks when they perceive a threat to exam performance or syllabus completion. Finally, although teachers demonstrated varying degrees of TBLT fidelity, they shared a common desire to support students' communicative competence. The variation in practice reflects not a rejection of TBLT but rather a strategic negotiation between ideals and reality. As (Pham & Nguyen, 2018) Pham suggest, such negotiation is central to how teachers rationalize innovation. Thus, rather than viewing inconsistencies as failure, they can be seen as evidence of teachers' context-sensitive professionalism.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the beliefs and practices of Indonesian senior high school English teachers regarding the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in speaking instruction. The findings revealed that while most teachers expressed favorable attitudes toward TBLT, actual classroom practices varied significantly. Some demonstrated structured application, aligning with the pre-task, task, and post-task phases, while others implemented tasks without fully embracing the communicative and learner-centered essence of the approach. The divergence between belief and practice was shaped by factors such as large class sizes, time limitations, students' mixed proficiency, and a lack of professional development opportunities. These results reaffirm the importance of not only fostering theoretical understanding but also providing supportive conditions that empower teachers to implement innovative methodologies like TBLT.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the broader literature on teacher cognition by emphasizing how contextual factors mediate pedagogical beliefs and actions. Practically, it underscores the need for localized, sustainable teacher training programs that focus on the practical application of TBLT within real classroom constraints. Institutional support, flexible curriculum policy, and collaborative teacher communities are essential to ensure the viability of communicative language teaching reforms. It is recommended that future studies incorporate student perspectives, longitudinal classroom observations, or comparisons across regions and school types to enrich our understanding of TBLT implementation in diverse Indonesian educational settings.

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