

The perceptions of task-based teaching by Chinese teachers of Portuguese as a foreign language

Percepção de professores de português como língua estrangeira na China sobre o ensino baseado em tarefas

Percepción de los profesores chinos de portugués como lengua extranjera sobre la enseñanza basada en tareas

[Qiuchen Deng](#)  [Sara Santos](#) 

Highlights

This study analyzed teachers' perceptions regarding task-based language teaching.

The teachers demonstrated limited knowledge of the methodological principles underlying this approach.

The participants expressed the view that pedagogical tasks can foster the development of students' communicative competence within the Chinese context.

Abstract

This quantitative study, based on questionnaires, aimed to investigate the perceptions of bilingual teachers in China regarding task-based teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. A questionnaire was administered to twenty-five participants. The results indicated that the teachers had limited knowledge of the methodological foundations of task-based language teaching, but recognized the benefits of adopting this pedagogical approach for enhancing students' communicative competence. It is expected that this study will provide a meaningful contribution to the reflection on teachers' perceptions of language education in Asian versus Western contexts.

[Resumo](#) | [Resumen](#)

Keywords

Portuguese as a foreign language. Communicative competence. Teachers' perceptions. Task-based teaching.

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| Introduction

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in instructional contexts, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has attracted the attention of researchers and educators for being an approach that emphasizes the use of meaningful activities (that is, meaning-focused) to develop students' communicative competence (Long, 2015; 2016; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Ellis et al., 2020). Empirical studies (Borro, 2022; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis et al., 2019; Santos, 2023a) have shown that, through form-focused instruction, TBLT enables reactive and natural learning—in other words, students' attention to specific language items arises when difficulties emerge in the course of solving communicative problems. In this way, TBLT respects learners' internal syllabus and processing capacity, thereby enhancing the acquisition of the foreign language.

Although many researchers acknowledge the effectiveness of TBLT in developing learners' communicative competence (Ellis, 2003; 2009; Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 2018; Van den Branden, 2006), this approach has also been subject to criticism (Hadley, 2013; Littlewood, 2007; 2014; Swan, 2005). Considering the differing perspectives on TBLT, Ellis et al. (2020) enumerate several of the criticisms found in the literature. For instance, the choice of the task as the unit of analysis for designing foreign language course syllabi is regarded by some critics as problematic due to the unpredictability of the language produced by students during task performance (Bruton, 2002; Seedhouse, 2005). Similarly, the acquisition of “new language” and the role of grammar remain points of contention between proponents and critics of TBLT. As a methodology that privileges incidental learning, its effectiveness is often questioned by advocates of more traditional approaches. Without rejecting the use of tasks altogether, critics argue that they should be used merely as supplementary activities aimed at promoting fluency (Swan, 2005), overlooking the fact that numerous studies (Gilabert, 2005; Malicka, 2014; 2018; Révész, 2011; Santos, 2018; 2021; 2023b) have demonstrated that task performance supports the development of learners' interlanguage.

In response to such criticisms, Ellis et al. (2020) argue that the use of tasks in the classroom can foster the development of more complex, accurate, and fluent discourse. They also emphasize the teacher's role in TBLT: beyond acting as a facilitator, the teacher serves as a key source of input—especially for less proficient students—for whom exposure to meaningful input is essential within the task-based framework. According to Ellis et al. (2020) and Long (2016), many of these criticisms are “non-issues,” as they overlook recent empirical findings related to the theoretical and methodological foundations of TBLT. Nevertheless, these proponents of TBLT acknowledge the validity of some of the critical arguments regarding foreign language learning within a task-based framework. One of the most contentious theoretical issues in the literature concerns the definition of the construct task. Given the proliferation of definitions, arriving at a consensual one can be difficult—particularly because the distinction between a traditional exercise and a pedagogical task is not always entirely clear (East, 2021; Ellis et al., 2020;

Faez & Tavakoli, 2019; Khezlrou, 2022; Sasayama, 2022). In TBLT, the pedagogical task is primarily associated with meaning, whereas exercises are typically focused on language structure (Sasayama, 2022). However, this distinction is not always straightforward. Sometimes, an activity may appear to be a task (for instance, a restaurant role-play), but it is used merely to have students practice specific structures (and vocabulary) introduced earlier in the lesson (during the presentation phase). In such cases, there is no clear communicative objective—only a linguistic one: the correct use of previously taught forms or lexis (East, 2021). In addition to the challenge of defining the concept of task, the use of the students' first language (L1) in the classroom and the acquisition context of learners are also important factors requiring attention when adopting TBLT. Generally speaking, many teachers believe that the use of the L1 is not allowed in a TBLT lesson (Carless, 2008), and some critics argue that grammar instruction is neglected in this approach (Ellis et al., 2020; Long, 2016). However, from a TBLT perspective, the moderate use of learners' L1 can actually facilitate the presentation of certain lexical and/or grammatical items, as well as help clarify the objectives and expected outcomes of the task. With regard to the acquisition context, Swan (2005) argues that adopting a structuralist approach is important in environments with limited exposure to the L2 (target language), where learners rely heavily on classroom instruction. Assuming that explicit learning is either absent or neglected in a TBLT-based curriculum, the author suggests that systematic, structured learning of linguistic items can enhance communicative competence in such contexts. However, TBLT does advocate focus on form, meaning that it does not reject the possibility of explicitly addressing grammatical and/or lexical items when appropriate in the classroom. In fact, Ellis (2009; 2017) emphasizes that TBLT is not a monolithic approach, and that many teachers' (and critics') perceptions of its methodological principles are inaccurate, often based on misunderstandings.

In the literature—particularly in the Asian context—TBLT is often viewed with skepticism by teachers, as a lack of understanding of its principles and procedures has led to negative perceptions of its classroom utility and applicability (Ellis et al., 2020). Since most of the research on teachers' perceptions of TBLT to date has focused on English language learning, the present study sought to examine the perceptions of teachers of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL) regarding TBLT in China. Based on a questionnaire, a quantitative analysis was conducted using responses from bilingual university instructors teaching PFL in the Chinese educational context. This paper is organized into six sections. The second section provides the theoretical framework, presenting the concept of task and the methodological principles of TBLT. The third section offers a review of the literature, highlighting previous studies conducted in Asian contexts. Next, the methodological aspects of the research are described, followed by the presentation and discussion of the results in the penultimate section. Finally, the paper concludes with final considerations, including some limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

| Concept of task and methodological principles of TBLT

As previously mentioned, the literature offers various definitions of the concept of task. Acknowledging this diversity, the present study adopts the definition proposed by Ellis et al. (2020). The author define a task as a work plan in which learners convey a message using their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources. A task, therefore, involves an information gap and requires the completion of a clearly defined communicative goal (Ellis et al., 2020, p. 10). Based on this definition, the ten methodological principles (MPs) of TBLT proposed by Doughty and Long (2003), and further developed by Long (2009; 2015; 2016), are presented below.

According to Long (2015), these principles are both theoretically and empirically grounded in research from the fields of SLA, educational psychology, philosophy of education, and curriculum design/management, among others. Among the ten methodological principles outlined by the aforementioned authors, three are original and exclusive to TBLT: the use of tasks as the unit of analysis, “elaborated input”, and “focus on form.”

According to Doughty and Long (2003) and Long (2009; 2015; 2016), the ten TBLT methodological principles are:

1. Use of tasks as the unit of analysis
1. Learning promoted through action
2. Elaborated input
3. Provision of rich input
4. Encouragement of inductive learning of expressions
5. Focus on form
6. Corrective feedback
7. Respect for the learner's internal syllabus and developmental processes
8. Promotion of collaborative learning
9. Individualized instruction

MP1 (Use of tasks as the unit of analysis) is what distinguishes TBLT from other communicative approaches, such as task-supported teaching, content-based instruction, or competency-based language teaching. In task-supported teaching, for instance, language is treated as an object and is broken down into different linguistic items, which are presented to students in isolation, with the expectation that they will later be synthesized. During the production phase, students perform tasks; however, the goal is to memorize and practice the specific structures that were introduced earlier. Indeed, in these item-based courses, tasks are included in the curriculum as tools to develop grammatical competence. In TBLT, on the other hand, the entire curriculum is designed around tasks. The task serves as the unit of analysis across all stages of instruction. MP1 fulfills the requirements of an analytic approach, since by focusing on meaning, learners are required to use and experiment with language as they complete pedagogical tasks. The aim of TBLT is

that, through task performance, students are able to solve problems that resemble real-life situations using the target language.

MP2 reflects the strong connection between action and learning. Research has shown that knowledge acquired through engagement in meaningful action is more likely to be retained in long-term memory (Li, 2010; Long, 2015; 2016). The pedagogical tasks used in TBLT lessons are linked to target tasks (real-world tasks), requiring learners to draw upon their linguistic resources to find solutions, thereby facilitating both comprehension and language production.

Elaborated input (MP3) is described as an alternative to both authentic input and simplified input (Long, 2015). Authentic input (texts used in real-life contexts) is not created with instructional purposes in mind, meaning that some texts may be too complex for learners with lower proficiency levels. As such, teachers may need to provide explicit explanations, potentially shifting the focus from communication-based learning to rule-based instruction. As for simplified input, while it is easier to understand than authentic input, it removes authentic features of real-world language use, and thus limits learners' exposure to unfamiliar linguistic items. Unlike both authentic and simplified input, elaborated input—as proposed in TBLT—is more suitable to learners' processing capacities, as it retains new lexical and grammatical items while preserving semantic content. According to Long (2015), elaborated input involves adding redundancy and regularity (through repetition, paraphrasing, synonym provision, etc.) to an authentic text, thereby making the input more comprehensible.

MP4 emphasizes the importance of exposing learners to a linguistically rich environment. For adult learners who are far from the target language environment, the major challenge is the lack of exposure to the language. Based on an analysis of learners' communicative needs, rich input offers numerous meaningful examples of the target language, enabling students to transfer what they learn in the classroom to real-life situations. In summary, rich input not only involves greater linguistic complexity through the use of elaborated texts, but also relates to quality, quantity, variety, authenticity, and relevance (Long, 2015).

In PM5, Long (2015) highlights the difficulties students face in learning collocations. For this reason, learners are encouraged to memorize certain expressions or collocations and reuse them in new situations and/or different contexts. Focus on form (MP6), one of the original TBLT principles, is based on the assumption that, in order to resolve communicative problems, learners must direct their attention to specific linguistic items and to the relationship between form, meaning, and function. Following this logic, MP7 supports the use of corrective feedback in foreign language learning contexts, as it is considered necessary in some situations and facilitative in others. During meaning negotiation, corrective feedback allows for simultaneous attention to form and meaning (Long, 2015). As such, providing corrective feedback is an important strategy in TBLT.

Regarding MP8, and drawing on findings from SLA research, Long (2015) states that—being an analytic approach—TBLT enhances learning by respecting the

learner's internal syllabus and the natural developmental process of language acquisition.

MP9 is grounded in studies that recognize the positive role of collaborative and cooperative work in language learning. Collaborative learning encourages active student participation and interaction, facilitating both meaning negotiation and focus on form.

Finally, MP10 underscores that TBLT is a learner-centered approach, in which course design should begin with an analysis of learners' needs and respect their internal curriculum and processing development. Long (2015) acknowledges the impact of individual differences—such as goals, interests, motivation, cognitive style, learning strategies, aptitude, and working memory—on second language acquisition.

| Previous studies in the Asian context

With regard to the implementation of TBLT in Asian contexts, several challenges have been identified, leading some scholars to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of non-native teachers of the target language. The study by Liu et al. (2021) revealed that most participants—English teachers in China—experienced psychological pressure when facing new challenges related to the use of TBLT. Furthermore, the study concluded that the public examination system was perceived as one of the main obstacles to the adoption of TBLT. Ye (2018) explored English teachers' perceptions of TBLT in secondary education in southwest China and found that teachers identified several issues in the implementation of the approach, including limited teaching resources and challenges in assessment methods. In Liu's (2011) investigation, many contradictions were found between ELBT and the current reality in university English teaching in China. Both teachers and students showed a lack of familiarity with the specific methodological principles and operationalization methods of TBLT. Moreover, teachers' heavy workload and numerous responsibilities contributed to a loss of energy and motivation to invest in pedagogical reform.

Other relevant studies have been conducted in different Asian countries. For instance, Harris (2016) examined the implementation of TBLT in Japan. Ten teachers who used the approach in their classes were interviewed regarding their motivations, beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of TBLT, and their views on common criticisms of the method. The results indicated that teachers recognized the effectiveness of TBLT in developing communicative competence, as well as the need to adapt the approach for beginners or for students accustomed to more passive learning styles. Jeon and Hahn (2006) distributed 228 questionnaires to teachers at 38 different schools in South Korea and found that most respondents had a relatively high level of understanding of TBLT principles. However, the study also identified some negative views regarding practical TBLT implementation. In the study, three main concerns were highlighted: the students involved did not feel confident in carrying out the task; teachers lacked appropriate materials; and large class sizes led to potential disciplinary issues.

In the literature, the advantages of TBLT appear to be more widely recognized in foreign language teaching within Western countries or societies. East (2012) investigated the perceptions of twenty-seven teachers in New Zealand and found that many had a high level of understanding of TBLT and held positive attitudes toward its implementation. According to the teachers interviewed, TBLT helps develop learners' communicative competence, promotes a balance between fluency and accuracy, and facilitates interaction and the development of proficiency.

It is worth noting that most of the studies cited pertain to the field of English as a foreign language. In the area of Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL), relatively few studies have been conducted on the implementation of TBLT, particularly within the Chinese context. No research has been found addressing teachers' perceptions of TBLT in the field of PFL in China. This study aims to help fill that gap and contribute to the pedagogical development of PFL teachers in China.

Through the use of a questionnaire, this quantitative study seeks to analyze the perceptions of Chinese PFL teachers working both in mainland China and in Macau regarding TBLT, and to address the following research questions:

1. Do the Chinese PFL teachers who participated in the study understand the methodological principles of TBLT?
2. What are the attitudes of the Chinese PFL teachers (participants in the study) toward TBLT?
3. Are there perceptual differences between teachers (involved in the research) working in mainland China and those working in Macau?

| Methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives, questionnaires were distributed to PFL teachers working in mainland China and Macau. In the field of social sciences, questionnaires are widely used to understand respondents' perceptions regarding a given topic. Brown (2001) defines a questionnaire as any written tool distributed to respondents that contains a series of questions or statements to which they must respond, either by answering the questions or by selecting among provided options. Although questionnaires can be administered in paper format, they are increasingly distributed through online platforms. This offers several advantages—such as saving time and resources, or guaranteeing participant anonymity—but also presents challenges, such as low participation rates or limited motivation to complete the survey (Iwaniec, 2020).

The design of the questionnaire followed the guidelines of Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009). The questionnaires used in studies by Liu et al. (2021), Jeon and Hahn (2006), and Harris (2016) served as the basis for the instrument developed in this study, as those studies also surveyed teachers working in Asian educational contexts. The questionnaire was distributed online in both Portuguese and Chinese (the native language of the respondents), in order to avoid any misunderstandings or ambiguities in the interpretation of the questions.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections: the first section included demographic questions, such as gender, region, age, years of experience teaching PFL, and subjects taught. The second section aimed to gather information on the teachers' understanding of TBLT, including eleven items (Q1–Q11), which helped assess their level of knowledge regarding the methodological principles of TBLT. The third section contained fifteen items (Q12–Q26). Based on the responses, the teachers' attitude towards ELBT was analyzed. The twenty-six items in the second and third sections of the questionnaire were designed using a five-point Likert scale (response options: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

Before the full deployment of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with the participation of four teachers. A preliminary survey was carried out to assess the feasibility of the selected research methods.

The questionnaire was administered online. It was uploaded to the *Wenjuanxing*¹ platform, and both a link and a QR code were generated. The invitation to complete the questionnaire was shared via email and WeChat messages sent to various universities across different regions of mainland China (to ensure geographical representativeness) and to universities in Macau (a Special Administrative Region of China where Portuguese is an official language). Out of forty-six emails sent to teachers from different universities and institutions, only eleven responses were received (24%). Regarding the WeChat platform, seventeen direct messages were sent to teachers, and fourteen completed questionnaires were collected, representing a response rate of 82.4%. In total, twenty-five valid questionnaires were obtained.

The participants in this study were 25 bilingual PFL (Portuguese as a Foreign Language) teachers working at higher education institutions in mainland China and Macau. Most of the respondents were female (88%) and between the ages of 20 and 39 (92% of participants). Nearly half of the participants (48%) had up to five years of teaching experience in PFL; 28% reported having between 6 and 10 years of experience, and 24% indicated between 11 and 20 years of service.

The respondents were affiliated with 14 different higher education institutions, including two located in Macau and twelve in mainland China. The list of these institutions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of the Respondents' Higher Education Institutions

Respondents' higher education institutions	Respondents
University of Macau	4 (16%)
Tianjin Foreign Studies University	3 (12%)
Harbin Normal University	3 (12%)
Macau Polytechnic University	2 (8%)
East China Jiaotong University	2 (8%)

1 *Wenjuanxing* (问卷星) is a Chinese platform designed for distributing questionnaires.

Jiangxi College of Foreign Studies	2 (8%)
Lanzhou Jiaotong University	2 (8%)
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	1 (4%)
Shanghai International Studies University	1 (4%)
Chengdu Institute of Sichuan International Studies University	1 (4%)
Xi'an International Studies University	1 (4%)
Hunan Normal University	1 (4%)
Yuexiu University of Zhejiang	1 (4%)
Dalian University of Foreign Languages	1 (4%)
Total	25 (100%)

Source: the authors.

The data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27.0 for Windows. Statistical analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to answer the first two research questions. Measures of central tendency and dispersion (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were used. To investigate differences between the two groups of teachers (mainland China vs. Macau)—that is, to address the third research question—inferential statistics were employed. An independent samples t-test was computed.

Results and discussion

Below are the results and discussion corresponding to the three research questions.

Regarding the first research question, Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the dimension "teachers' understanding of TBLT." The table includes the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) for each item. Items 3, 4, 5, and 8 obtained a mean score of four or higher, indicating that the teachers agreed with the corresponding statements. TBLT was recognized as a learner-centered approach, organized into three stages, and one in which, through contextualized real-world tasks, students are expected to act and use the language appropriately.

Table 2

Table 2 – Teachers' Understanding of TBLT (*N*=25):

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1. The task primarily focuses on meaning.	3.36	0.95
Q2. The task has a clearly defined communicative goal.	3.96	1.02
Q3. TBLT is a learner-centered approach	4.00	1.04
Q4. The task focuses on real-world contexts.	4.44	0.51
Q5. TBLT includes three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task.	4.52	0.59
Q6. Learners can use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources to complete the task.	3.96	1.17
Q7. The task involves an information, reasoning, or opinion gap.	3.44	1.29
Q8. In TBLT, students must be able to act in the language—that is, use it appropriately.	4.44	0.51
Q9. In TBLT, the teacher does not teach grammar.	2.88	1.33

Q10. In TBLT, the teacher does not provide corrective feedback to students.	3.12	1.24
Q11. In TBLT, input may be elaborated—i.e., authentic texts can be made more comprehensible.	3.72	1.17

Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

Source: the authors.

Table 3 presents the frequencies and percentages associated with statements related to teachers' understanding of TBLT. In response to the first item, 52% of teachers understood that the task primarily focuses on meaning. For the second item, the majority of teachers agreed that a task includes a clearly defined communicative goal—an aspect that has often been cited in the literature as a core criterion in defining the concept of a task. Regarding the relationship between the task and real-world contexts (Q4), all teachers agreed that tasks should focus on real-world situations. Results from items 3 and 5 suggested that over half of the teachers associated TBLT with a learner-centered approach, and that most of them recognized the existence of three distinct phases within TBLT: pre-task, task implementation, and post-task. For item six, 64% of the teachers agreed that students could use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources while performing a task. Five teachers indicated they were unsure, and four disagreed with the statement. In item seven, 56% of teachers believed that a task should involve an information, reasoning, or opinion gap.

In item eight, responses were unanimous—every teacher selected either “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Items 9 and 10 were related to focus on form, a key principle of TBLT. In response to item nine—regarding the possibility of grammar instruction within TBLT—seven teachers (28%) rejected the idea. There was a tie in responses: 36% selected “not sure,” and 36% agreed that grammar could be taught in a TBLT lesson. In the responses obtained in item 10, there was also a percentage tie (32%) in relation to the importance of corrective feedback in TBLT: eight teachers denied the possibility of providing corrective feedback, while eight teachers defended the importance of corrective feedback in TBLT. The remaining nine teachers (36%) selected “not sure.” In item 11, more than half (68%) of the teachers considered that input could be elaborated. However, five teachers (20%) disagreed with this statement.

In conclusion, the analysis of responses related to teachers' understanding of TBLT indicates that PFL teachers in China show divergent views regarding the methodological principles of TBLT. In particular, responses revealed considerable divergence in relation to the focus on form principle, as most teachers did not clearly identify the possibility of explicit grammar instruction or the importance of corrective feedback within a TBLT lesson. In contrast, the use of elaborated input was a more consensual topic, with the majority of participants recognizing it as a valid principle. Thus, although some key theoretical assumptions of TBLT were identified, there remains a limited overall understanding of this pedagogical approach. It is possible that many teachers favor a weak version of TBLT (Ellis, 2017)—that is, task-supported language teaching, which resembles the Presentation/Practice/Production (PPP) model, in which tasks serve primarily as

opportunities to practice language items that have been introduced through traditional methods.

Table 3

Table 3 – Frequencies and Percentages Related to Teachers' Understanding of TBLT (N=25)

Item	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Q1. The task primarily focuses on meaning.	2	6	24
	3	6	24
	4	11	44
	5	2	8
Q2. The task has a clearly defined communicative goal.	2	3	12
	3	4	16
	4	9	36
	5	9	36
Q3. TBLT is a learner-centered approach	2	3	12
	3	4	16
	4	8	32
	5	10	40
Q4. The task focuses on real-world contexts.	4	14	56
	5	11	44
Q5. TBLT includes three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task.	3	1	4
	4	10	40
	5	14	56
Q6. Learners can use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources to complete the task.	2	4	16
	3	5	20
	4	4	16
	5	12	48
Q7. The task involves an information, reasoning, or opinion gap.	1	2	8
	2	5	20
	3	4	16
	4	8	32
	5	6	24
Q8. In TBLT, students must be able to act in the language—that is, use it appropriately.	4	14	56
	5	11	44
Q9. In TBLT, the teacher does not teach grammar.	1	5	20
	2	4	16
	3	9	36
	4	3	12
	5	4	16
Q10. In TBLT, the teacher does not provide corrective feedback to students.	1	2	8
	2	6	24
	3	9	36
	4	3	12

	5	5	20
Q11. In TBLT, input can be elaborated—i.e., authentic texts can be made more comprehensible.	1	1	4
	2	4	16
	3	3	12
	4	10	40
	5	7	28

Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

Source: the authors.

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of the responses to the items from the third section of the questionnaire, which focused on “teachers’ attitudes toward TBLT.” These results correspond to the second research question.

The mean scores for items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, and 26 were relatively high (above 3), indicating that, in general, teachers agreed with the statements presented in those items. For the remaining three items (17, 21, and 25), the mean score was below 3, suggesting that teachers disagreed with the corresponding statements.

Table 4

Teachers’ Attitudes Toward TBLT (*N*=25)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q12. I am interested in implementing TBLT in my classes.	3.96	0.84
Q13. TBLT provides a more relaxed environment to promote the use of the target language.	3.76	1.01
Q14. Tasks can foster students’ interest and stimulate personal motivation.	3.76	1.01
Q15. TBLT offers learners extensive input and output opportunities to develop target language proficiency.	3.88	0.88
Q16. TBLT enables interaction among students as well as between students and the teacher.	4.40	0.58
Q17. TBLT is not suitable for teaching grammar.	2.84	1.38
Q18. TBLT is not suitable for learners with low proficiency levels.	3.40	1.23
Q19. Grammar and vocabulary should be taught before students perform a task.	3.12	1.13
Q20. Tasks cannot serve as the organizing unit of a language course curriculum.	3.44	0.96
Q21. Compared to other approaches, the teacher’s role is less important in a TBLT classroom.	2.36	1.15
Q22. Teacher scaffolding during the pre-task phase is important.	4.04	0.84
Q23. It is difficult to prevent excessive use of the native language during task performance.	3.52	1.16
Q24. Using the native language is not allowed in a TBLT classroom.	3.12	1.09
Q25. TBLT is not suitable for foreign language contexts (for instance, China).	2.96	0.89
Q26. Considering the Chinese context, TBLT needs to be adapted and combined with other approaches.	4.16	0.69

Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

Source: the authors.

Table 5 presents the means, frequencies, and percentages for items 12 to 26, which refer to teachers' attitudes toward TBLT. In the first statement of the third part of the questionnaire (Q12), 80% of the teachers expressed interest in implementing TBLT in their classes. The results suggest that these Chinese teachers are open to and eager to explore and adopt this approach to enhance language learning. In item 13, 78% of respondents agreed that TBLT creates a relaxed environment in which students can engage in meaningful communication. In Q14, 76% believed that tasks can foster student interest and stimulate motivation. In Q15, 72% of teachers agreed that TBLT provides extensive input and output opportunities, which support the development of target language proficiency. Finally, in item 16, 96% of respondents agreed that TBLT facilitates interaction both among students and between students and teachers. Regarding Q17, 48% of the teachers considered that grammar instruction does have a place in TBLT. At the same time 24% expressed uncertainty, while 28% viewed TBLT as unsuitable for teaching grammar. As for the adoption of TBLT with low-proficiency learners (Q18), only 28% considered it appropriate. This view may stem from the misconception that TBLT is limited to oral tasks, without recognizing the value of input-based tasks for beginners in foreign language learning (Ellis, 2003; Ellis et al., 2020).

In item 19, 48% of teachers agreed that grammar and vocabulary should be taught during the pre-task phase, while 40% disagreed and 12% selected “not sure.”

Responses to item 20 revealed a rejection of the idea that tasks can serve as the organizing unit of a language course curriculum: 52% agreed with the statement, and 28% selected “not sure.” These results are significant, as this is one of the core and distinctive principles of TBLT—whereas in traditional or task-supported approaches, linguistic items are typically the unit of analysis.

The responses to statements 21 and 22 reflected recognition of the teacher's role in TBLT. In the first item, 72% of the teachers disagreed with the statement, and in the second item (Q22), 76% agreed that teachers should provide scaffolding during the pre-task phase—that is, offer support to help students in the learning process.

Regarding the use of the first language (L1) in TBLT classrooms (Q23 and Q24), the results were somewhat contradictory: In Q23, 60% agreed that it is difficult to prevent excessive use of the L1 during tasks, yet only 32% disagreed with the prohibition of L1 use in TBLT (Q24).

Finally, in items related to the Chinese learning context for PFL (Q25 and Q26), there was near consensus (92%) favoring an eclectic approach (Q26), combining TBLT with other methods. In item 25, responses were more mixed: A portion of the teachers (40%) disagreed with the statement that TBLT is not suitable for foreign language contexts such as China, while 24% expressed uncertainty (“not sure”) and 36% agreed with the statement.

Overall, these findings align with the results from the first research question. The Chinese PFL teachers who participated in this study generally showed interest and openness toward task-based instruction in the classroom, but also expressed

contradictory views. This may indicate that the adoption of tasks in the Chinese context is understood more as task-supported teaching rather than a strong version of TBLT. The rejection of the task as the unit of analysis in course design is particularly telling of this perspective.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages Related to Teachers' Attitudes (N=25)

Item	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Q12. I am interested in implementing TBLT in my classes.	2	2	8
	3	3	12
	4	14	56
	5	6	24
Q13. TBLT provides a more relaxed environment to promote the use of the target language.	2	1	4
	3	4	16
	4	14	56
	5	6	24
Q14. Tasks can foster students' interest and stimulate personal motivation.	2	1	4
	3	4	16
	4	14	56
	5	6	24
Q15. TBLT offers learners extensive input and output opportunities to develop target language proficiency.	2	2	8
	3	5	20
	4	12	48
	5	6	24
Q16. TBLT enables interaction among students as well as between students and the teacher.	3	1	4
	4	13	52
	5	11	44
Q17. TBLT is not suitable for teaching grammar.	1	4	16
	2	8	32
	3	6	24
	4	2	8
	5	5	20
Q18. TBLT is not suitable for learners with low proficiency levels.	1	1	4
	2	6	24
	3	6	24
	4	6	24
	5	6	24
Q19. Grammar and vocabulary should be taught before students perform a task.	1	1	4
	2	9	36
	3	3	12
	4	10	40
	5	2	8
Q20. Tasks cannot serve as the organizing unit of a language course curriculum.	2	5	20
	3	7	28

	4	10	40
	5	3	12
Q21. Compared to other approaches, the teacher's role is less important in a TBLT classroom.	1	5	20
	2	13	52
	3	1	4
	4	5	20
	5	1	4
Q22. Teacher scaffolding during the pre-task phase is important.	2	1	4
	3	5	20
	4	11	44
	5	8	32
Q23. It is difficult to prevent excessive use of the native language during task performance.	1	1	4
	2	5	20
	3	4	16
	4	10	40
	5	5	20
Q24. Using the native language is not allowed in a TBLT classroom.	1	1	4
	2	7	28
	3	8	32
	4	6	24
	5	3	12
Q25. TBLT is not suitable for foreign language contexts (for instance, China).	2	10	40
	3	6	24
	4	9	36
Q26. Considering the Chinese context, TBLT needs to be adapted and combined with other approaches.	2	1	4
	3	1	4
	4	16	64
	5	7	28

Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

Source: the authors.

As previously mentioned, to answer the third research question, a between-subjects comparison was conducted—that is, the two groups of teachers (mainland China vs. Macau) were compared. The inferential statistical data (independent samples t-test) are presented in Table 6 and reveal some statistically significant differences between the perceptions of teachers from mainland China and those from Macau. Regarding the statements related to the definition of task and TBLT, statistically significant differences were found in the second ($t = 3.076$; $p < 0.01$) and fifth ($t = -4.609$; $p < 0.01$) questionnaire items, indicating some discrepancy in responses. While the mainland China group associated the concept of a task with the presence of a clearly defined communicative goal ($M = 4.26$ vs. $M = 3$), the Macau group clearly identified the three phases of the task cycle ($M = 5$). Concerning statements related to focus on form—a core methodological principle of TBLT—statistically significant differences were found in three items: item 9 ($t = 2.419$; $p < 0.05$), item 10 ($t = 6.080$; $p < 0.01$), and item 17 ($t = 3.233$; $p < 0.01$). Compared to

respondents from mainland China, teachers from Macau were more likely to acknowledge the possibility of grammar instruction (Q9) and the use of corrective feedback (Q10) within TBLT, as their response values were lower. Regarding the appropriateness of TBLT for grammar learning (Q17), both groups responded in a similar direction, although the values were higher among mainland China respondents. In the item “tasks can foster students’ interest and stimulate personal motivation,” a significant difference was also found ($t = -2.331$; $p < 0.05$), with higher response values in the Macau group ($M = 4.33$ vs. $M = 3.58$). Significant differences also emerged regarding the difficulty in preventing excessive use of the L1 during task performance (Q23) ($t = 3.479$; $p < 0.01$). Respondents from mainland China reported higher values than those from Macau ($M = 3.89$ vs. $M = 2.33$, respectively). Finally, for the statement “TBLT is not suitable for foreign language contexts (for instance, China),” significant differences were detected ($t = 6.834$; $p < 0.01$) between the Macau group ($M = 2$) and the mainland China group ($M = 3.26$), suggesting a more favorable attitude toward the implementation of TBLT among Macau teachers.

In conclusion, the inferential statistical results appear to confirm certain differences between teachers from Macau and those from mainland China, particularly regarding their attitudes. Teachers working in Macau showed greater openness toward the methodological principles of TBLT. These attitudinal differences between the two groups may be related to the status of Portuguese in Macau (as an official language), as well as to specific characteristics of language instruction in the region (for example, a longer-standing presence of native-speaking teachers, allowing for more frequent exposure to communicative approaches by bilingual instructors). However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as the sample size in this study was small. Further research in this area may help to clarify these differences and provide a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying the data presented.

Table 6

Differences in the Perceptions of Teachers from Mainland China and Macau

	Mainland China ($n = 19$)		Macau ($n=6$)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q1. The task primarily focuses on meaning.	3.42	0.96	3.17	0.98	0,562	0,579
Q2. The task has a clearly defined communicative goal.	4.26	0.73	3.00	1.26	3,076	0,005**
Q3. TBLT is a learner-centered approach	3.84	0.96	4.50	1.22	-1,375	0,183
Q4. The task focuses on real-world contexts.	4.42	0.51	4.50	0.55	-0,327	0,747
Q5. TBLT includes three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task.	4.37	0.60	5.00	0.00	-4,609	0,000**
Q6. Learners can use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources to complete the task.	4.05	1.08	3.67	1.51	0,696	0,494
Q7. The task involves an information, reasoning, or opinion gap.	3.42	1.26	3.50	1.52	-0,128	0,900

Q8. In TBLT, students must be able to act in the language—that is, use it appropriately.	4.47	0.51	4.33	0.52	0,583	0,565
Q9. In TBLT, the teacher does not teach grammar.	3.21	1.23	1.83	1.17	2,419	0024*
Q10. In TBLT, the teacher does not provide corrective feedback to students.	3.58	1.02	1.67	0.52	6,080	0,000**
Q11. In TBLT, input can be elaborated —i.e, authentic texts can be made more comprehensible.	3.63	1.16	4.00	1.26	-0,663	0,514
Q12. I am interested in implementing TBLT in my classes.	3.89	0.94	4.17	0.41	-0,683	0,501
Q13. TBLT provides a more relaxed environment to promote the use of the target language.	3.68	1.11	4.00	0.63	-0,871	0,397
Q14. Tasks can foster students' interest and stimulate personal motivation.	3.58	1.07	4.33	0.52	-2,331	0031*
Q15. TBLT offers learners extensive input and output opportunities to develop target language proficiency.	3.74	0.93	4.33	0.52	-1,481	0,152
Q16. TBLT enables interaction among students as well as between learners and the teacher.	4.32	0.58	4.67	0.52	-1,318	0,201
Q17. TBLT is not suitable for teaching grammar.	3.26	1.28	1.50	0.55	3,233	0,004**
Q18. TBLT is not suitable for learners with low proficiency levels.	3.47	1.31	3.17	0.98	0,527	0,603
Q19. Grammar and vocabulary should be taught before students perform a task.	3.00	1.11	3.50	1.22	-0,943	0,356
Q20. Tasks cannot serve as the organizing unit of a language course curriculum.	3.47	1.02	3.33	0.82	0,306	0,762
Q21. Compared to other approaches, the teacher's role is less important in a TBLT classroom.	2.32	1.16	2.50	1.22	-0,336	0,740
Q22. Teacher scaffolding during the pre-task phase is important.	4.00	0.88	4.17	0.75	-0,416	0,681
Q23. It is difficult to prevent excessive use of the native language during task performance.	3.89	0.94	2.33	1.03	3,479	0,002**
Q24. Using the native language is not allowed in a TBLT classroom.	3.32	1.06	2.50	1.05	1,651	0,112
Q25. TBLT is not suitable for foreign language contexts (for instance, China).	3.26	0.81	2.00	0.00	6,834	0,000**
Q26. Considering the Chinese context, TBLT needs to be adapted and combined with other approaches.	4.21	0.54	4.00	1.10	0,645	0,525

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: the authors.

| Final considerations

Based on the theoretical foundations of TBLT, this study presented an analysis of the perceptions of 25 Chinese PFL teachers regarding task-based language teaching. An online questionnaire was administered, and the collected data were statistically analyzed. According to the results obtained, there appears to be limited knowledge of TBLT's methodological principles among these teachers, although they did recognize advantages in implementing the approach. Although foreign language teaching in China is often associated with structuralist approaches, the teachers who participated in this study expressed interest in adopting a task-based approach and showed openness toward this pedagogical proposal, especially those Chinese teachers working in Macau.

Naturally, this study has certain limitations in both scale and questionnaire content. The sample size is relatively small, and the fact that data collection was conducted online may have negatively impacted the results, as some respondents may have completed the questionnaire hastily or superficially. In terms of content, the questionnaire did not differentiate between the weak and strong versions of TBLT, making it difficult to determine whether the teachers were more aligned with one version or the other. Although it is not possible to generalize the current state of TBLT implementation in China based on this study alone, the findings offer some insightful perspectives for future research. It is hoped that this study contributes to the development of TBLT in China and serves as a starting point for further investigations into teachers' perceptions of PFL teaching in different contexts. In the future, it will also be important to investigate students' perceptions of TBLT.

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About the authors

Qiuchen Deng

Gannan University of Science and Technology, Ganzhou, China

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1794-8027>

Master's Degree in Portuguese Language and Intercultural Studies (Applied Linguistics track) from the University of Macau (2022). Lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities, Gannan University of Science and Technology, China. Email: 9320220034@gnust.edu.cn

Sara Santos

University of Macau, China

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8852-3380>

PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Macau (2018). Assistant Professor at the University of Macau, China. Email: saras@um.edu.mo

Contribution to the preparation of the text: the authors contributed equally to the preparation of the manuscript.

Resumo

Este estudo quantitativo, baseado em questionários, teve como objetivo investigar a percepção de professores bilíngues na China relativamente ao ensino de português como língua estrangeira baseado em tarefas. Foi aplicado um questionário a vinte e cinco informantes. Os resultados mostraram que os professores tinham um conhecimento limitado dos pressupostos metodológicos do ensino de línguas baseado em tarefas, mas reconheciam benefícios na adoção desta proposta pedagógica para o desenvolvimento da competência comunicativa dos alunos. Espera-se que este trabalho seja um contributo válido para a reflexão de questões relativas à percepção de professores de língua em contextos asiáticos versus contextos ocidentais.

Palavras-chave: Português como língua estrangeira. Competência comunicativa. Percepção de professores. Ensino baseado em tarefas.

Resumen

Este estudio cuantitativo, basado en un cuestionario, pretendía investigar las percepciones de los profesores bilingües de China sobre la enseñanza del portugués como lengua extranjera basada en tareas. Se administró un cuestionario a veinticinco informantes. Los resultados mostraron que los profesores tenían un conocimiento limitado de los supuestos metodológicos de la enseñanza de lenguas basada en tareas, pero reconocían los beneficios de adoptar esta propuesta pedagógica para desarrollar la competencia comunicativa de los alumnos. Se espera que este trabajo suponga una valiosa contribución a la reflexión sobre cuestiones relativas a la percepción de los profesores de idiomas en contextos asiáticos frente a los occidentales.

Palabras clave: Portugués como lengua extranjera. Competencia comunicativa. Percepción de los profesores. Enseñanza basada en tareas.

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