Teaching with Tasks: Exploring Vietnamese Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions and Readiness for TBLT Implementation

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Abstract. The teaching approach known as task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained popularity as a means of instruction that improves learners' language proficiency through meaningful communication and real-world tasks. This study investigated the perceptions and readiness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers in a university in Vietnam regarding TBLT. A mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews was utilized to understand TBLT preparation issues comprehensively. Thirty-eight fourth-year English Language Teacher Education students participated in the survey, which provided quantitative information about their comprehension of TBLT concepts and their readiness for its application. Five participants were invited for semi-structured interviews to understand the factors impacting their provisioned choice of teaching methods and their confidence levels with TBLT. Data analysis involved statistical techniques using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for the questionnaire responses and thematic analysis for the interview transcripts. The results showed that these Vietnamese pre-service teachers were highly knowledgeable in understanding TBLT and its advantages, such as fostering language fluency, enhancing meaningful interaction between teachers and students, and preparing students for real-life communication. The teacher-students expressed confidence and eagerness to apply TBLT in their future teaching. However, practical issues, including class size and time constraints, were noted as potential barriers to the successful implementation of the approach. The findings suggested helpful implications for teacher education and professional development in Vietnam and similar EFL contexts.

Keywords: challenges; perceptions; pre-service teachers; readiness; task-based language teaching

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1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained popularity and is currently recognized as a potentially powerful language pedagogy in various educational settings worldwide (Ahmadian & Mayo, 2017; Bygate, 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; van den Branden, 2009). The primary objective of TBLT is to enable students to communicate effectively in class by prioritizing the functional use of language in real-life scenarios, thereby promoting optimal learning. In contrast to traditional form-based approaches, the task-based approach involves the specification of a sequence of interactive tasks to be performed in the target language rather than learning a sequence of language items (Rozati, 2014; Seedhouse, 2017; Taguchi & Kim, 2018; Wen & Ahmadian, 2019).

To motivate English learning and enhance the competence of English students, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Vietnam and teachers in other EFL contexts have been trained and encouraged to utilize TBLT. Previous research in language education has focused on investigating the efficacy of TBLT in fostering learners' language skills (Nguyen, 2022; Pietri, 2015; Tale & Goodarzi, 2015; Trinh & Ha, 2017), and the findings of these studies suggest that this approach has a positive impact on enhancing the quality of classroom instruction and developing students' language skills.

However, despite the acknowledged benefits of TBLT, its actual implementation faces various challenges. Many studies have been conducted to find out the reasons why teachers do not or hesitate to choose to implement TBLT as well as the difficulties they encounter when practicing TBLT in the classroom, Aside from objective factors such as time constraints and large class size (Alvarado et al., 2023; Lam et al., 2021; Mettar, 2021), some subjective factors also affect the implementation of this method, such as lack of TBLT understanding and training, low English proficiency in teachers and learners, and teachers' familiarity with traditional teaching methods (Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Liu & Ren, 2021; Taourite & Cecilia, 2020). For instance, in the study by Taourite and Cecilia (2020) involving 76 EFL teachers from three public and private schools in Spain, when asked about the reasons for avoiding the implementation of the TBLT method in their classrooms, the majority of the respondents claimed that they refrained from applying TBLT because they were not accustomed to teaching English using this approach (97.3%), or they had very little knowledge of task-based instruction (98.6%).

Teachers must be trained to comprehensively understand second-language acquisition theories and TBLT principles to implement this method effectively. According to van den Branden (2006), teacher education programs are optimally positioned to provide an impetus for change in educational practices. Given that the pedagogical beliefs of pre-service teachers are shaped by the teacher education programs they attend, these programs should, therefore, provide practical, experiential, and task-based training to prepare them for further instruction (Dao, 2016; Loi, 2020; Phuong, 2018; Van den Branden, 2006).

However, most previous studies on TBLT have focused on either the outcomes of TBLT on learners' language development or the challenges and barriers that teachers face in implementing TBLT (Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Liu & Ren, 2021; Taourite & Cecilia, 2020) and, as such, there is a lack of research on how pre-service teachers perceive and understand TBLT, especially in the Vietnamese context. Meanwhile, according to Ansari and Shahrokhi (2014), a teacher's perception of a teaching approach or method is critical since it plays a central role in deciding which approach or method to adopt in their lessons. Perception is even more crucial for pre-service teachers, as everything is new to them; the perceptions they form during their training will significantly impact their future teaching practices.

Pre-service teachers are vital to the future of foreign language education, making it essential to understand their attitudes and readiness toward TBLT. Their perceptions can reveal potential barriers or challenges to implementing this approach in the classroom. Addressing these issues early on allows teacher education programs to offer the necessary support and resources to successfully empower pre-service teachers to integrate TBLT into their teaching practice. Moreover, pre-service teachers' perceptions influence their enthusiasm and confidence in using TBLT. If they perceive TBLT positively and feel prepared to use it, they are more likely to implement it effectively, leading to better student language learning outcomes. Conversely, if they harbor negative perceptions or feel unprepared, they might resist adopting TBLT, potentially hindering its effectiveness.

Investigating pre-service teachers' perceptions can also provide insights into the effectiveness of current teacher training programs. If these programs are lacking in preparing teachers for TBLT, necessary adjustments can be made. This proactive approach ensures that future educators have the knowledge and skills to implement TBLT effectively. Understanding pre-service teachers' perceptions and readiness for TBLT can also guide the development of targeted professional development programs. These programs can address specific areas where pre-service teachers feel less confident, providing them with practical strategies and tools to enhance their teaching practice.

Therefore, a study on pre-service teachers' perceptions and readiness toward TBLT is necessary. Addressing their concerns and providing adequate support during their training can ensure they are well-prepared to implement TBLT effectively in their future classrooms. This approach enhances their teaching practice and contributes to better student learning outcomes. Thus, the current research aimed to comprehensively examine Vietnamese pre-service teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their readiness to implement it in future teaching practices and identify key factors influencing their intentions to adopt this

innovative approach. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions.

RQ1. What is the extent of Vietnamese pre-service teachers' theoretical and practical understanding of TBLT?

RQ2. What is the level of readiness of Vietnamese pre-service teachers to implement TBLT in their future teaching practices?

RQ3. What internal and external factors influence Vietnamese pre-service teachers' intentions to apply TBLT in their teaching?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Essentials of TBLT

2.1.1 *What is TBLT?*

Before TBLT emerged, various pedagogical methods were explored and tested as innovations in language education. Among these were the audio-lingual method, the structural approach, communicative language teaching (CLT), and others. The above-mentioned methods often focused on linguistic form and grammar rules while neglecting the development of communication skills. As Long (2015) points out, these approaches resulted in teacher-centered instruction, which limited the effectiveness of language learning.

The main idea of TBLT is based on the assumption that language acquisition is an unconscious process triggered by the need to convey and comprehend messages (Prabhu, 1987). One of the pioneers of TBLT was Prabhu, a teacher and researcher in Bangalore, South India, who initiated the Communicative Teaching Project in 1983. Prabhu designed a series of tasks for his learners, such as finding differences between two pictures, following directions on a map, or solving puzzles. He observed that his learners improved their language proficiency without explicit instruction or feedback, as they were focused on the meaning and outcome of the tasks rather than on the form and accuracy of the language (Prabhu, 1987).

TBLT stems from constructivist theories of learning and CLT. According to constructivist learning theories, knowledge is constructed by students based on prior experience and understanding. In other words, learning is the search for meaning by linking prior knowledge with new experience. Students work actively in groups with self-reflection, and teachers are facilitators and co-constructors of knowledge with students through inquiry (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010). These assumptions indicate that learning is not viewed as a passive process of absorbing information from a teacher. However, instead, students actively seek to make sense of new experiences and new information through the filter of their purposes, interests, prior experiences, and knowledge (Ahmadian & Mayo, 2017; Bygate, 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; Farrell & Jacobs, 2010; van den Branden, 2009).

TBLT is a dynamic and interactive pedagogical approach that prioritizes the use of language as a tool for communication, aligning with the CLT philosophy. It is designed around tasks that are both meaningful and practical, encouraging learners to use language authentically as they would in real-life situations (Seedhouse, 2017; Taguchi & Kim, 2018; Wen & Ahmadian, 2019). These tasks, which form the core of TBLT, are goal-oriented activities such as exchanging

personal information, solving problems, sharing experiences, or debating on various topics. They are carefully chosen to reflect the language learners encounter outside the classroom (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Norris, 2016; van den Braden, 2016).

TBLT is not solely about communication, however. It also focuses on linguistic form, recognizing that accuracy and correct usage are essential to language proficiency. This dual focus ensures that while learners are engaged in communication, they are also becoming more aware of the language structures that make such communication possible. During the language focus phase, learners are guided to notice and practice specific grammatical patterns, often through consciousness-raising activities highlighting the form-function relationship in language use (Moore, 2018; Samuda & Bygate, 2008).

Moreover, TBLT allows for the integration of form-focused instruction within the communicative flow of the task. This can be achieved through pre-task activities that prepare learners for the upcoming communicative challenge or post-task activities that reflect on the language used during the task. Feedback is a crucial element in this process, as it provides learners with corrective input that can be immediately applied in subsequent language use, thereby reinforcing learning and fostering improvement (van den Branden, 2006; Willis, 1996).

The flexibility of TBLT also allows for adaptation to various teaching contexts and learner needs. Tasks can be scaled in complexity and structured to cater to different proficiency levels, ensuring that all learners are challenged appropriately. This adaptability makes TBLT a versatile approach that can be implemented in diverse educational settings, from primary schools to adult language courses, and across different language systems and skills (Ellis, 2003; Thomas & Reinders, 2010).

2.1.2 *Definition of task*
Several studies have discussed how a task can be defined differently depending on the pedagogical and real-world perspectives. Long (1985) offers a very broad definition of a task, which may or may not involve the use of language or linguistic knowledge. That is, a task can be done either with language or without language. Prabhu (1987), in his groundbreaking study on language tasks, defines a task as "*[a]n activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process*" (p. 24). Similarly, Willis (1996) views a task as an activity that enhances learners' interaction to reach the task outcome. Learners need to understand the goals of the tasks and complete them meaningfully, within a specific time frame, and in the target language. The main emphasis of these tasks is on communication; hence, less attention is paid to grammar or structure during the task performance. Additionally, Nunan (2004) explains the term task more clearly, arguing that a task is a type of classroom work that engages learners in understanding, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while focusing on using their grammatical knowledge to express meaning, the purpose being to communicate meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of wholeness, functioning as an independent

communicative act with a beginning, a middle, and an end (Nunan, 2004). Despite the variations in the definitions of tasks, a task can be understood as an activity or a sequence of activities that usually involve one or more problems to be solved or a desired outcome. Tasks require language and interaction to solve problems, focusing on meaning (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996).

2.1.3 *A framework of TBLT*
One of the most influential and widely used models of TBLT is the framework proposed by Jane Willis (1996), which consists of three main stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. The framework's core components are illustrated in Figure 1.
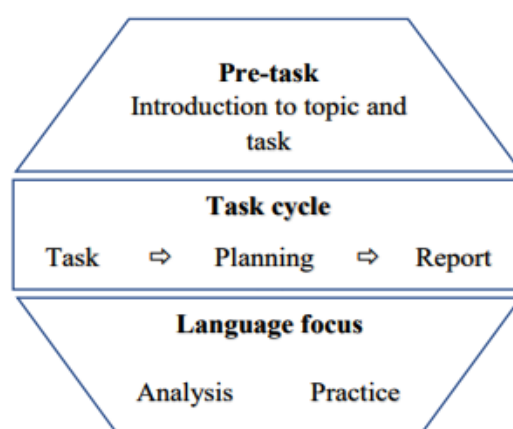

Figure 1: Willis' (1996) TBLT framework

According to the principles of second language acquisition (SLA) research, language learning is improved by natural exposure to input, output, and feedback in meaningful contexts. Based on these principles, Willis (1996) advocates for using tasks, which are activities with a clear goal and a real purpose for language use. She argues that tasks are the best way to achieve such conditions, as they are goal-oriented activities that require learners to use language for a real purpose. In addition, tasks foster learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement by allowing students to choose the language forms and techniques that best suit their needs and preferences. Willis' framework has been the most preferred by practitioners for its clear-cut and easy-to-follow procedure.

2.2 TBLT: Advantages and Challenges
2.2.1 *Advantages of TBLT*
An advantage of TBLT is its focus on real-world language use and communication skills. According to Nunan (2004), tasks provide learners opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts, promoting fluency and communicative competence. Students can develop their language skills more practically and interactively by engaging in tasks that simulate authentic communication situations. The argument is supported by East (2014), with teachers in their study highlighting that TBLT enables students to engage in authentic interaction using

appropriate communicative language, with tasks being the main focus. Furthermore, TBLT facilitates genuine, real-life communication, which helps learners improve their ability to communicate in the target language in real-life situations. Long (2015) also contends that task-based activities promote creative language use, leading to a better understanding of linguistic structures and functions.

Another advantage of TBLT is its promotion of learner autonomy and motivation. As Ellis (2003) suggested, tasks can be inherently motivating as they offer learners a sense of purpose and achievement. By allowing students to take charge of their learning process and make decisions about how to complete tasks, teachers can empower them to become more self-reliant and self-motivated. This autonomy can result in heightened participation and perseverance in language learning activities.

2.2.2 *Challenges in implementing TBLT*
Despite its benefits, TBLT also has some limitations. One disadvantage is the potential lack of focus on accuracy in language production. According to Skehan (1998), students may put fluency ahead of accuracy in task-based learning environments, which might result in mistakes that persist if they are not corrected. In the long run, learners may acquire communication habits that impede their overall language ability if form and correctness are neglected. Another drawback of the task-based approach is that it puts much extra responsibility on the teacher. Teachers participating in East's (2014) study stated that TBLT requires more preparation and resource creation, which puts more burden on teachers. They need time to plan assignments and monitor their students' task progress. As a result, this method requires teachers to invest more effort in frequently reviewing and reflecting on lessons to ensure students remain engaged.

2.3 The Teacher's Role in TBLT
As mentioned above, TBLT emphasizes student-centered interaction and learning as essential components. Therefore, some critics have claimed that the teacher's role in a task-based classroom is reduced to that of a coordinator or supervisor of activities (Swan, 2005). The fact is that, in this approach, the role of the teacher is crucial and complex, as the teacher has to perform various functions before, during, and after the task implementation. The significance of the teacher's role in TBLT has been constantly highlighted as actually demanding more skill and adaptability than teaching in a traditional 'focus on forms' method (van den Branden, 2016). Therefore, in-service and pre-service teachers must understand its principles and their role in the TBLT classroom to apply them effectively.

Liu and Ren (2021) state teachers are 'task organizers' in TBLT classrooms. This involves creating or choosing tasks that meet the learners' needs, goals, and proficiency levels (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teachers should consider topics, complexity, outcome, sequencing, support, and assessment when designing tasks. Teachers need to ensure that tasks align with curriculum objectives and assessment criteria, while also providing opportunities for learners to practice language skills effectively (van den Branden, 2006). Teachers must be flexible and

adaptable, as tasks may require adjustments based on learner feedback and performance (Borg, 2015).

Moreover, the role of teachers in creating a supportive and motivating learning environment that encourages active student involvement cannot be overstated. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), teachers take on the role of facilitators by providing guidance and motivation to students during tasks. This includes giving clear instructions, assisting with problem-solving, and fostering a conducive atmosphere for learning (van den Branden, 2016). The findings of Liu and Ren's (2021) study further reinforce this notion, asserting that teachers act as guides, counselors, and mentors, facilitating student learning and engagement in TBLT lessons. Teachers must also serve as attentive listeners, providing opportunities for students to share their learning experiences and achievements. One participant in Liu and Ren's (2021) study stated: "*If there are things that the students have to share with me, then I am an audience*" (p. 7).

Teachers' classroom practice and professional development are greatly influenced by their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes toward language teaching and learning. According to van den Branden (2006), teacher education programs have the potential to foster innovative teaching methods. Therefore, teachers need to receive thorough training to ensure they possess a deep understanding of TBLT and language to implement this approach effectively. Research by Taourite and Cecilia (2020) supported Van den Branden's statement, specifically in that two participants in their study emphasized the importance of supporting teachers in realizing and differentiating their roles in a learner-centered TBLT lesson. This can be achieved through specialized training that explains the various roles of the teacher in a learner-centered approach like TBLT, as well as assisting teachers in becoming material developers who can adapt or create materials that are suitable for both themselves and their students.

In conclusion, to implement TBLT successfully, educators must understand the method's fundamental principles and fully comprehend their various responsibilities within the TBLT classroom. This demands that educators be thoroughly equipped with theoretical knowledge and practical skills to organize activities, offer support, and establish an optimal learning atmosphere for their students.

2.4 Previous Research on TBLT Perceptions

Numerous studies have focused on teachers' perceptions of TBLT worldwide. In Turkey, Öcel and Su Bergil (2022) investigated the attitude of teachers and found that, overall, teachers had a positive attitude toward the approach and implemented it in their teaching. However, they faced several challenges, and the implementation was only a degree lower than desired. For example, less positive findings were reported in a mainly qualitative study by Torusdağa and Tunç (2020). They showed that Turkish teachers had limited knowledge of TBLT, so they could not appropriately implement the approach.

In another context, Mettar's (2021) study revealed that EFL teachers in Morocco understood TBLT well, but their implementation was limited. Challenges included a lack of resources, big class sizes, overuse or dependence on L1, etc. Similar findings were reported from other contexts, e.g., Iran (Mahdavirad, 2017), Ecuador (Alvarado et al., 2023), and China (Liu & Ren, 2021).

Alvarado et al. (2023) surveyed teachers' perspectives on implementing TBLT in public educational institutions in Ecuador. Their results showed that most teachers had sufficient knowledge of TBLT concepts and understood the role of a task. However, many teachers did not want to apply this method because they thought their textbook materials were unsuitable and their classes were too large.

In China, Liu and Ren (2021) investigated the perspectives and practices of university TBLT teachers. Their findings revealed that Chinese EFL teachers primarily employed a task-supported language teaching approach rather than fully implementing TBLT. Tasks were viewed mainly as language practice tools rather than acquiring new linguistic skills. Similar to other educational contexts, adopting TBLT in China faced challenges such as the lack of task-based textbooks, limited TBLT knowledge and training opportunities, large class sizes, and other curricular constraints.

In Iran, Mahdavirad (2017) examined how EFL teachers perceived the implementation of TBLT. In surveying 160 teachers from 20 language institutes, they found that teachers firmly understood TBLT principles but hesitated to implement them. This reluctance was attributed to several practical challenges: integrating TBLT into current teaching practices and the lack of teacher training programs to support TBLT adoption.

In Vietnam, Pham and Nguyen (2018) investigated the perception and implementation of TBLT by 68 EFL teachers in five universities in the Mekong Delta. The results were similar to those of Öcel and Su Bergil (2022), who indicated that educators held positive opinions about TBLT and were willing to implement it in their teaching. Nevertheless, they encountered obstacles: unfamiliarity for learners, large class sizes, assessments, materials, preparation, and limited proficiency.

Also in Vietnam, Dao (2016) focused on investigating teachers' perceptions of TBLT at a university in Hanoi. Using questionnaires, the study found that teachers understood TBLT principles well and were positive about implementing them. Nonetheless, most participants agreed that TBLT should be adapted to fit the Vietnamese context. This was because Vietnamese students had long been familiar with the traditional teaching and learning methods in which the primary focus was on forms rather than meaning, and their learning goals and context might also differ from those in other countries.

While the previous research on TBLT discussed above provided valuable insights into teachers' perceptions and experiences, limitations and gaps require further investigation. One standard limitation found in these studies is the focus on in-

service teachers, overlooking the viewpoints of pre-service teachers. Meanwhile, according to Ansari and Shahrokhi (2014), the perception a teacher has of a teaching approach or method is critical since it plays a central role in the teacher's decision about which to adopt in their lessons. Perception is even more crucial for pre-service teachers, as everything is new. The perceptions they establish during their training will significantly impact their future teaching. Pre-service teachers play a vital role in the future of language education, thereby making it essential to understand their attitudes and readiness toward TBLT. This can help identify potential barriers or challenges they may be concerned with when implementing this approach in the classroom. By addressing these issues early on, teacher education programs can offer support and resources to empower pre-service teachers to integrate TBLT into their future practice. Thus, the current study explored pre-service teachers' perceptions and readiness for TBLT. Touching on overlooked areas, this study can help improve TBLT implementation strategies and enhance language education practices in Vietnam and similar contexts. In short, while existing research has focused on the efficacy of TBLT and the challenges in-service teachers face, this study uniquely examines the perceptions and readiness of Vietnamese pre-service teachers, offering new insights that can inform teacher education curricula and policy development.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research design
The study used a mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' perspectives on TBLT in Vietnam and their readiness for its implementation in the future. As defined by Creswell (2014), quantitative methods are systematic investigations that employ statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques for data analysis. is the approach is instrumental in identifying patterns, making predictions, and testing causal relationships. In contrast, as Denzin and Lincoln (2017) described, qualitative research represents a significant method of inquiry that is widely utilized across various academic fields. This approach is particularly valued for its depth of exploration into complex human behaviors and societal trends. Our decision to use a mixed-method approach was based on a desire to utilize the strengths of both research methods. This allowed us to comprehensively capture the knowledge and readiness of pre-service teachers regarding TBLT.

3.2 Participants
The survey included 38 pre-service teachers (12 males and 26 females), and five were selected for interviews. These participants voluntarily consented to participate in the project. All participants were fourth-year students majoring in English Language Teacher Education at a university in Vietnam. Fourth-year students were chosen because they had been exposed to TBLT during their academic preparation, ensuring they were well-informed and qualified to offer insightful views on TBLT.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 *Questionnaire*

The main research tool used in this study is a questionnaire designed to collect data on pre-service teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their readiness for its implementation. It consisted of three parts: Part I: demographic information; Part II: understanding of TBLT (adapted from Jeon and Hahn, 2006); and Part III: readiness for TBLT (adapted from Taourite, 2022). Likert's framework (Table 1) was employed for categorizing and ranking.

Table 1: Interpretation of a five-point scale (Likert, 1932)

Score range	Mean rating	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
3.41 – 4.20	Agree	High
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low

Five EFL teachers thoroughly evaluated the questionnaire to guarantee language accuracy and content validity. Their comments and perspectives were key in improving the survey instrument, increasing its credibility and efficiency in obtaining valuable answers.

3.3.2 *Interviews*

In this study, an interview was designed to discuss the topic with five teacher students. Interviews were carried out in person and recorded to guarantee precise data collection. The interview questions were carefully designed to gain answers about the participants' confidence level in using the knowledge acquired from the ELT course, their choices for teaching methods, and the factors to consider when selecting approaches to apply in their future teaching. Participants were also asked about their readiness and grasp of TBLT, and their level of assurance and understanding was evaluated using a scale of 1 to 10.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

This study used SPSS software version 22 to analyze the data regarding how pre-service teachers view TBLT. Firstly, all 29 responses in the questionnaire were checked to ensure they were complete and accurate, with no missing information, and to ensure the dataset was dependable. Following this, the reliability of the questionnaires was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this research, Cronbach's alpha value was .767 (Table 2), which indicates appropriate reliability (above the acceptable threshold of .7, according to Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). This suggested that the questionnaire items effectively captured pre-service teachers' perceptions and readiness for TBLT implementation.

Table 2: Questionnaire Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.767	29

For the interview data, the researchers began transcribing all the audio recordings for the data analysis. They listened to them multiple times, keeping the content verbatim, and analyzed and categorized the answers. The most relevant details were translated into English and are presented in the result section.

4. Results and Discussions
4.1 Results from the Questionnaire
4.1.1 *Pre-service teachers' perceptions of TBLT*
As shown in Tables 3–5, participants displayed a strong understanding of task-based learning principles and the approach's benefits, with most items ranking as 'very high' or 'high'. According to the Likert interpretation criteria (refer to Table 1), the mean scores of all items in the cluster knowledge of tasks vary from high to very high. Item 2 has the lowest mean score (*M = 3.658*), while item 4 focuses on the target language use and scores the highest (*M = 4.368*). This indicates that the participants place the highest value on authentic language use, which reflects their understanding of TBLT principles.

Table 3: Pre-service teachers' understanding of 'task'

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
1	A task is a goal-oriented form of communication	3.868	.9911	High
2	A task involves a primary focus on meaning	3.658	.8471	High
3	A task has a clearly defined outcome	4.237	.7141	Very high
4	A task is an activity in which the learner uses the target language	4.368	.7136	Very high

Table 4 contains statements indicating the participants' understanding of TBLT. Again, the mean scores range from 4.053 to 4.421. Although the standard deviations are relatively high, showing the pre-service teachers' variation in their perceptions, perhaps caused by their personal learning experience, they generally conceive TBLT as an approach that encourages learner-centeredness, involves multiple phases of instruction, and belongs to CLT.

Table 4: Pre-service teachers' understanding of TBLT

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
5	TBLT supports learner-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness	4.421	.6831	Very high
6	TBLT is a sub-branch of CLT	4.053	.6954	High
7	TBLT includes three stages: pre-task, task-implementation, and post-task	4.421	.7215	Very high

Table 5 displays the participants' perceived benefits and challenges of TBLT. Items 8 and 15 receive the highest mean scores of *4.289* and *4.211,* respectively. These two items are categorized as 'very high'. In comparison, seven items are ranked as 'high', all indicating specific TBLT benefits, noticeably its goals in

fostering learner autonomy and improving language fluency. On the contrary, four items receiving lower mean scores are those associated with the challenges. For instance, TBLT can cause pressure on the part of teachers (*M = 3.158*), require learners to have a certain level of proficiency (*M = 2.684*), and is not suitable for large classes (*M = 2.816*).

Table 5: Perception of benefits and challenges of TBLT

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
8	I am interested in learning how to implement TBLT in the classroom	4.289	.6111	Very high
9	TBLT provides a relaxing atmosphere to promote the target language use	4.105	.6893	High
10	TBLT meets learners' needs and interests	3.868	.8111	High
11	TBLT helps to develop integrated skills in the classroom	4.158	.7176	High
12	TBLT lays a psychological burden on teachers*	3.158	1.0533	Moderate
13	TBLT requires much preparation time compared to other approaches*	3.816	.8005	High
14	TBLT is proper for making classroom arrangements	3.816	.8005	High
15	TBLT materials should be meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context	4.211	.6220	Very high
16	Learners cannot do a task unless they have achieved fluency and accuracy in English*	2.684	1.1176	Moderate
17	TBLT is not helpful in large classes*	2.816	1.1115	Moderate
18	TBLT can promote the learners' creativity and ability to do things	4.105	.6489	High
19	Low-proficient learners can do a task well	3.711	.7318	High

statements expressing disadvantages

4.1.2 *Pre-service teachers' readiness for implementing TBLT*
The data in Table 6 indicate Vietnamese pre-service teachers' attitudes about integrating TBLT into their future teaching. Item 20 shows their excitement to try TBLT, with an *M = 4.053* and an *SD = .6128*. Similarly, the student teachers believe they can benefit from incorporating TBLT into their future teaching practices, with item 21 receiving an *M = 4.026* but with a slightly higher *SD = .7161*.

Table 6: Pre-service teachers' attitudes toward TBLT implementation

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
20	I am excited to try task-based lessons in my future teaching.	4.053	.6128	High
21	I can benefit from implementing TBLT in my future teaching.	4.026	.7161	High

Table 7 presents the results of statements probing pre-service teachers' readiness for implementing TBLT, particularly regarding their perceived confidence. Overall, the student teachers show high readiness, believing they can carry out every aspect of task-based instruction, from material design and adaptation to lesson delivery to learning assessment. Against the 5-level Likert score categorization, all the means of the eight items in this cluster are over 3.789 and fall into the 'high' rank. Noticeably, Item 25, with the highest mean value ($M = 4.053$), shows that these participants are highly confident about the flexibility of combining textbooks with authentic materials for TBLT lessons.

Table 7: Pre-service teachers' confidence in implementing TBLT

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
22	I consider teaching with the TBLT approach more effective than traditional teaching.	3.868	.8111	High
23	I am confident in my ability to teach English using tasks.	3.789	.7036	High
24	I can implement the TBLT approach in my classroom.	3.974	.4925	High
25	I can mix textbook-based knowledge with the TBLT approach.	4.053	.5171	High
26	I can adjust my TBLT lesson to the proper level for my students.	3.974	.7161	High
27	I can develop TBLT materials that would meet my lesson plan.	3.895	.7983	High
28	I can adapt to a positive learning environment in my TBLT lesson.	3.842	.7543	High
29	I can assess students' performance in my TBLT lesson.	3.921	.7121	High

The results above reveal that the participants' positive attitudes and high confidence levels in TBLT reflect the effectiveness of their training program. The program integrates theoretical instruction and practical micro-teaching with TBLT and project-based learning, which form a strong foundation for these future teachers. As the participants are from the same cohort, the high standard deviations in some items (such as Items 16, 17, 19, and 21) reflect a divergence in opinions based on individual factors, including teaching experience or familiarity with TBLT.

4.2 Results from the Interviews
4.2.1 *Self-rated readiness with TBLT*
The interviewed pre-service teachers (n=5) expressed varying confidence levels in their readiness to implement TBLT. Their self-rated confidence levels ranged from moderate to high (between 7 and 9) on a 1-10 continuum. When given the freedom to choose their favorite method, three out of the five respondents selected TBLT.

This inclination toward TBLT shows that it is not just a passive acceptance but an active eagerness to adopt TBLT in their pedagogical practice. Together with the perception revealed in the questionnaire, this result confirms that the teachers-to-be in this study possess both theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of TBLT and are potentially ready for their future implementation.

4.2.2 *TBLT or traditional: Provision of influencing factors*
The reasons for the interviewees' confidence and readiness with TBLT stem from several factors. The first factor is their educational background and practical experiences in previous language courses, particularly teaching methods courses in their ELT program. For instance, one respondent expressed confidence after completing courses on teaching methods, stating:
> *"After the courses, I feel quite confident because I have learned additional theoretical foundations, from which I can choose teaching methods suitable for students."* (Extract 1)

Another participant shared a similar view, stating that the practice and feedback received during their educational program helped them prepare to be better teachers.
> *"During the learning process, our teachers have provided us with opportunities to practice teaching and constructive feedback to help us prepare better."* (Extract 2)

Moreover, the recognition of the benefits of TBLT is another factor that influences pre-service teachers' attitudes and readiness. Specifically, in the interviews, they stressed the potential of TBLT in developing language fluency and communicative competence since students are given tasks where they need to use a foreign language in real-life situations. One participant noted:
> *"The strength of the TBLT method is that it helps learners develop the ability to explore in searching for information to complete tasks. It also creates opportunities for learners to demonstrate speaking skills..."* (Extract 3)

Moreover, the interviewees realized clearly that, in the TBLT classrooms, students and teachers are supposed to have opportunities to interact with one another. One respondent stated:
> *"The highlight of TBLT is the more interaction between teachers and students..."* (Extract 4)

While TBLT receives certain enthusiasm from pre-service teachers, some are more confident in the potential applicability of traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method. In their opinion, this is still practical, especially in high school. One of the participants confessed:
> *"I prefer the grammar-translation approach because it's quite common in high schools."* (Extract 5)

The participants further expressed concerns about the practicality of TBLT, for example, in big classes, where students vary greatly in terms of language proficiency. One participant reflected on this challenge, saying:

> *"With such a large class, some current new methods are quite difficult to apply because they are not suitable for the current situation in high schools."* (Extract 6)

5. Discussions and Implications
5.1 Perceptions of TBLT
Generally, the pre-service teachers' perceptions of TBLT in the studied institution are relatively positive, as evidenced in the questionnaire and interview responses. The data consistently indicate the participants' strong understanding of the notion of 'tasks' and TBLT principles, with high mean scores across items related to the goal-oriented nature of tasks, the focus on meaning, outcomes, and integration of the target language within tasks, the learner-centered nature of TBLT, its relationship with CLT, and the different stages involved in task implementation. As discussed in previous literature (Long, 1985; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996), TBLT is typically defined as involving meaningful communication and focusing on language-use tasks that promote language acquisition. Therefore, this suggests that the participants in this study possess a good knowledge related to tasks and the fundamental principles of TBLT. This finding aligns with research results about understanding the nature of tasks and TBLT concepts in other contexts, such as Ecuador (Alvarado et al., 2023) and Iran (Mahdavirad, 2017), where teachers also demonstrate sufficient knowledge about this teaching approach.

On the other hand, the participants recognize the strengths of TBLT, such as creating opportunities to practice language and produce outcomes in the classroom, promoting language fluency and communicative competence, and fostering learners' creativity… The interviews provide further depth to these positive perceptions about the benefits of TBLT, as some participants felt that TBLT could lead to more meaningful interaction between students and teachers, leading to collaborative learning and more peer support. These findings are also true in Ecuador (Alvarado et al., 2023), where researchers report similar positive views among teachers about TBLT benefits.

5.2 Readiness for TBLT
The study also reveals the readiness of Vietnamese pre-service English teachers to implement TBLT. Together with the information gained from the interviews, the quantitative survey offers an informative picture of how these student teachers are prepared and ready to adopt this approach in their prospective classrooms. Overall, the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews suggest considerable confidence and readiness among pre-service teachers regarding their ability to incorporate TBLT into their teaching practices. Most participants demonstrated confidence in key areas relevant to implementation, such as integrating TBLT with traditional practice, combining knowledge from textbooks with TBLT activities, and adjusting TBLT lessons to meet individual

student needs. Insights from the interviews offer additional depth, revealing important sources wherein this high confidence level is rooted.

Positive attitudes and readiness for TBLT suggest the effectiveness of the ELT program at the university where it is studied. On the one hand, the students received theoretical instruction, which shaped their teaching orientation. On the other hand, they are sufficiently trained to be able and willing to apply TBLT, at least in addition to other traditional methods. The teachers-to-be share a well-informed understanding of methods and their flexibility to be 'eclectic' (Richards & Rogers, 2014) regarding particular teaching settings with particular learners. This understanding is argued to be a competence of a language teacher in the 'post-methods' era (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

It is remarkable, however, that although the participants expressed confidence in adopting TBLT, their readiness levels for implementing this approach varied. Even though they understood the theoretical principles and potential advantages of TBLT, they have raised issues about its practical application. One factor that causes reluctance is the large size of classes. The participants assume that TBLT is not valuable for large-size classes, where the level of learners' proficiency may be diverse. Another significant concern is the amount of time required for preparation. Most pre-service teachers agree that designing and carrying out task-based activities effectively demands additional effort and time. The considerations also entailed the need for meaningful and contextually relevant materials and the psychological burden on teachers, not all of whom are well-prepared and ready to be task-based instructors.

These results align with previous research conducted in countries like Ecuador (Alvarado et al., 2023), Morocco (Mettar, 2021), China (Liu & Ren, 2021), and Vietnam (Pham & Nguyen, 2018). While educators in these settings acknowledge the benefits of TBLT, they encounter practical obstacles that impede its implementation, such as oversized classes, insufficient preparation time, and limited resources.

5.3 Implications
The significance of this study holds considerable implications for the foreign language learning and teaching landscape in Vietnam, especially those related to English language teacher training. First, the research explores the perceptions of pre-service teachers about TBLT. It is necessary because teachers' beliefs and attitudes are crucial in determining their instructional practices and efforts to utilize new teaching strategies. Given that the ELT situation is still traditional, grammar-focused, and teacher-centered in Vietnam (Chi, 2022; Le, 2018), it is critical to understand the acceptance level of the pre-service teachers, as it may indicate the probability of shifting in the teaching strategies. Consequently, educators and teacher trainers may be aware of the areas where pre-service teachers are more or less supportive so they can plan targeted interventions to make the environment more beneficial for TBLT.

Secondly, the study addresses the readiness of pre-service English teachers to implement TBLT in their future classrooms. Readiness and confidence encompass theoretical understanding and the practical ability to design and execute tasks that promote language acquisition. The findings from this inquiry can inform teacher education programs, highlight the strengths and gaps in their current training, and suggest improvements to better equip future educators with the skills necessary to employ TBLT effectively. Furthermore, the study's outcomes can have broader implications for language education policy in Vietnam and similar contexts. As the country continues to integrate into the global community, the demand for proficient English speakers rises; TBLT, with its focus on communicative competence, aligns well with these needs (Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Yen, 2016).

Furthermore, this research contributes to the growing literature on TBLT, particularly from future practitioners' perspectives. It adds empirical evidence to the discourse on the applicability of TBLT and its effectiveness in different cultural and educational settings. Finally, the study can potentially enhance teacher training programs in Vietnam and beyond. By pinpointing pre-service teachers' specific needs and concerns regarding TBLT, teacher educators can tailor their courses to address these issues, fostering a new generation of teachers who are knowledgeable about TBLT and skilled in its application.

6. Limitations, Recommendations, and Conclusion
While this study provides valuable insights into pre-service teachers' perceptions and readiness for TBLT implementation, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. The study's sample size was noticeably small, with just 38 respondents from a single institution answering the questionnaires and five participants participating in interviews. This relatively small sample may restrict the representativeness of the findings and limit the generalizability of the results to broader populations of pre-service teachers. Furthermore, the findings may be influenced by specific contextual factors unique to the researched institution, such as institutional policies, curricular frameworks, and prevailing pedagogical practices. This may limit its applicability to other contexts. Future research should consider expanding the scope of the investigation to include a larger, more diverse sample and research sites. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding and offer a richer comparative analysis of educational practices in different settings.

To conclude, this study has provided insights into the perceptions of and readiness for TBLT implementation, raising the voice and viewpoint of pre-service teachers. While pre-service teachers demonstrate positive attitudes toward TBLT and express confidence in implementing this approach, several challenges and considerations still exist. Addressing these challenges and leveraging the strengths of TBLT, teacher education programs, and educational stakeholders can better prepare future educators to meet the needs of diverse learners and promote meaningful language learning experiences. Through ongoing research, collaboration, and professional development initiatives, we can

continue to enhance the quality and effectiveness of language teaching and learning practices in Vietnam and beyond.

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