

# **Task-based Language Teaching in Chinese EFL Context: Learners' Attitudes and Perceptions**

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## **Abstract**

The attitudes and perceptions on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have recently received sustained academic attention. But most of these studies were done from teachers' perspective. Despite learners' central role and the great influence their attitudes and perceptions can have on their learning results in TBLT class, learners' attitudes and perceptions about TBLT have not received the due attention. Little has been done to investigate how language learners respond to TBLT in this respect, which is especially true in China. This paper aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions among a group of English as foreign language (EFL) learners in China. A sample of 166 learners at the tertiary level participated in the study. A task-based questionnaire was introduced to examine the attitudes and perceptions of these participants. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results suggested a high level of understanding about task and TBLT properties among the majority of respondents. They generally hold positive attitudes and perceptions towards TBLT and therefore, most of the learners like to carry out TBLT in their English class teaching. Some important problems revealed by the findings are discussed and implications also offered.

**Key words:** Task-Based language teaching, Chinese EFL context, attitudes and perceptions.

## **1. Introduction**

The past three decades have witnessed the introduction and the development of Western language teaching methods into the Chinese context and Chinese teachers and researchers' attitudes towards language teaching have changed from the traditional Grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods towards communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Nerlicki, 2011). Since its introduction into China in the late 1990s, TBLT has received sustained attention from teachers and researchers. Much research about TBLT has been done and they mainly focus on the definitions of task, the role of tasks in second language acquisition (e.g. Ellis 2000; Skehan 1996), contextual factors in China that will influence the implementation of TBLT, such as the rigid national examinations, availability of resources, students' different needs and language proficiency levels. Some also try to work out a feasible framework of TBLT for English language teaching. Experiments can also be found with TBLT in classroom teaching practice in order to improve language skills such as writing, speaking or reading. Attitudes and perceptions about TBLT are another important research area, but such studies are mostly carried out from the perspective of the teachers (Nahavandi, 2012). There are few empirical studies made to investigate language learners' attitudes and perception in Chinese EFL context. Jeon (2005) holds that language acquisition is an extremely complex process which involves interactions of a number of variables including materials, activities, and evaluative feedback, TBLT has a dramatic, positive impact on these variables. It implies that TBLT provides learners with natural sources of meaningful material, ideal situations for communicative activity, and supportive feedback allowing for

much greater opportunities for language. Similarly, Carless (2009) argues that a further strength of a task-based approach is that because it involves students in active learning through communicative use, it is assumed to have a positive impact on motivation of learners. Despite its educational benefits in language teaching, a task itself and TBLT can not necessarily guarantee the successful implementation unless we understand how learners, playing a central role in classroom learning and teaching, respond to TBLT because foreign language learners often hold different beliefs or notions about language learning (Horwits, 1987). The existing research suggests that these beliefs and notions can pose great influence on their learning. Stevick (1980) asserts that "success depends less on materials and techniques and more on what goes on inside the learner." Recent researchers have also examined learners' perceptions about language learning for different purposes. But, language learning research lacks empirical evidence for the way language learners perceive TBLT.

Therefore, considering the important roles language learners and their attitudes and perceptions play in TBLT, it is quite necessary to investigate learners' attitudes and perception about TBLT in Chinese EFL context. In light of this, this study aims to explore Chinese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions of TBLT based on investigating their understandings of TBLT concepts, positions on TBLT implementation by teachers, and reasons why they like or dislike TBLT in the classroom. The findings will provide insight for teachers to design and implement any real communicative tasks, and consequently, what the teachers do based on the findings will be greatly useful for language learning in the Chinese EFL context in which English is a foreign language.

## **2. Defining task and the theoretical background of TBLT**

As the central component of TBLT, task covers many different interpretations and definitions. Skehan (1998a), reflecting a broad consensus among researchers and educators, suggests four defining criteria: 1). meaning is primary; 2). there is a goal which needs to be worked towards; 3). the activity is outcome-evaluated; 4). there is a real-world relationship. Candlin (1987) defines task as "one of a set of differentiated, sequenceable, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu". In this way, emphasis of task is put on the learners' learning preferences that are opposed to the language learning processes and on the social and problem-solving orientation. Prabhu (1987:24) defines task as "an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process". In this sense, tasks are examined in terms of cognitive complexity because tasks engage the learner in thinking processes. Nunan (2004:4) provides a comprehensible pedagogical definition by emphasizing that

"a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, in which the attention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end".

As the latest methodological realization of communicative pedagogy (Hu, 2005: 15), TBLT stems from psycholinguistic and constructivist learning theories. From a psycholinguistic perspective, a task is a device that guides learners to engage in certain types of information-processing that are believed to be important for effective language use and/or for language acquisition from some theoretical standpoint

(Ellis, 2000). Skehan, Foster and Mehnert (1998:245) put it 'task properties have a significant impact on the nature of performance'. In this sense, Ellis (2000) argues that there is a close correlation between the task-as-workplan and the task-as-process because the activity that results from the task-as-workplan is predictable from the design features of the task. Constructivist learning theories imply the following features: 1) knowledge is constructed by students based on prior experience and understanding; 2) learning is the search for meaning by linking prior knowledge with new experience; 3) students work actively in groups with self-reflection; and 4) teachers are facilitators and co-constructors of knowledge with students through inquiry (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010: 60-61). These assumptions are consistent with the claim made by Ellis (2003) that the overall purpose of a task-based approach is to create opportunities for language learning and skill development through collaborative knowledge building. Therefore, from a psycholinguistic and constructivist perspective, learning is not viewed as a passive process by learners to absorb information transmitted by teachers; rather, students actively seek to make sense of new experiences and new information through the filter of their purposes, interests, prior experiences, and knowledge and interaction in the classrooms (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010).

Within the various understandings of TBLT based on the psycholinguistic and constructivist learning theories, recent studies suggested that pedagogically, TBLT has strengthened the following principles and practices (Nunan, 2004): 1) A needs-based approach to content selection; 2) An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; 3) The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situations; 4) An enhancement of the learner's own experiences; 5) The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom.

### **3. Literature review and statement of the problem**

TBLT in China has now received much attention in research. The research that has been done about TBLT in China can mainly be grouped into the following categories.

Firstly, some research has been devoted to introducing TBLT into the classroom teaching of English language. Yue (2002) introduces the theoretical underpinnings of TBLT and discusses how to design tasks based on task goals, task types and teaching materials. Fang (2003) examines features and importance of TBLT and explores the feasibility to carry out TBLT from a cognitive and psychological perspective. Definitions of task and TBLT and how to design a task-based syllabus are also discussed in Qin & Qi (2004). They also pointed out the theoretical underpinnings of such a syllabus and its problems in Chinese EFL context.

Secondly, much research has been done to explore how to apply TBLT into specific teaching conditions in China. These studies are mainly concerned with the application of TBLT in the teaching of language skills. Ji & Shi (2004) explore how to apply TBLT in the listening class. Tan & Dong (2007) analyze the influence of task types on the language accuracy of language in oral English class. The effects of TBLT on reading are discussed in Huang (2004) who explores the importance of TBLT on vocabulary teaching. Ruan (2001), Liu (2005) and Zhu (2007) investigate the usefulness of using TBLT in the writing classes to help improve learners' writing abilities. Thirdly, a few researchers explored the perceptions of applying TBLT in China. For example, Cheng (2011) raises concerns about EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT and the impact on their classroom practices to identify challenges and possibilities in TBLT implementation. Liu, Mishan & Chambers (2013) investigate EFL teachers' attitudes towards TBLT and assess the current implementation of TBLT in Chinese colleges by focusing on teachers' familiarity with the concept of TBLT, their use of this method, and the challenges it poses for their practice as English teachers

Rao (2002) explores thirty Chinese EFL undergraduates' perceptions of communicative and

non-communicative activities using quantitative and qualitative data. Participants reported favoring some communicative (e.g., student-student and student-teacher interaction, personal responses to students' exercises, and songs) and other non-communicative activities (e.g., audio-lingual drills, dictionary exercises, teacher's explanations of grammatical rules, error correction, and obedience to teacher's instruction). A reconciliation of both activity types was recommended accordingly.

TBLT was first introduced with the aim of involving students in authentic language context to develop their communicative competence. Learners play a central role in class teaching and learning and can determine the level of success TBLT may achieve (Chung & Huang, 2009). Understanding their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, preferences, and needs is inevitable if EFL instruction is really behind empowering students linguistically and culturally (Savignon, 2007). Clear understanding of learners' attitudes and perceptions of TBLT as a widespread framework in shaping current definitions of the goals set for EFL teaching is quintessential to help learners attain these goals (Savignon & Wang, 2003). Therefore, an exploration of learners' attitudes can lead to more effective language learning results. To date, little has been done to investigate learners' attitudes and perceptions of TBLT in Chinese EFL context. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out the present study.

#### **4. Research design and methods**

##### *4.1 Research questions*

The present study aims to investigate Chinese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions of TBLT. For this purpose, the following questions are posed to be pursued:

- 1) How well do English learners in China understand TBLT?
- 2) What are the Chinese EFL learners' perceptions on the implementation of TBLT?
- 3) Why do English learners in China like, or dislike the implementation of TBLT?

##### *4.2 Participants*

A total of first-year 166 non-English majors studying in China West Normal University (Nanchong City, Sichuan Province) participated in the questionnaires. These learners were chosen from three English classes taught by the teacher researcher and they have different language levels including lower level, average level, better than the average level and advanced level. These college students are aged from 18 to 20.

##### *4.3 Instrument*

A questionnaire adapted from Jeon's (2005) study and Willis, D & J Willis (2007) was used to explore Chinese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions of TBLT. Jeon (2005) adapted partly and modified the questionnaire items from Nunan's (2004) checklists for evaluating communicative tasks. The questionnaire includes some Likert-type items and two open-ended questions. It is composed of four parts: first part includes questions to collect general information about their majors, gender and language levels. The second section asks questions to gain insights into how well they understand the concept task and TBLT. The third section is designed to find out the learners' perceptions on classroom TBLT practice. As for learners' attitudes and perceptions, the items in the questionnaire are designed to explore the most important relationships based on their general understandings of tasks and TBLT: TBLT versus grammar and exam; TBLT versus classroom management and language environment; TBLT versus learners' language competence; TBLT versus learners' traditional beliefs about language learning; etc.

In the second and third sections, learners are invited to answer each question item using a 5-point scale

ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Correspondingly, in the fourth part, learners choose their reasons to indicate why they like or dislike TBLT application in class teaching.

Validity of the questionnaire and appropriateness for the Chinese setting were verified through presenting it to two professors with expertise in EFL instruction, three experienced English teachers. Reliability was ensured through distributing the questionnaire to a sample of 40 students.

#### *4.4 Data collection procedure*

The teacher researcher distributed the questionnaires to the participants of the study in her three classes at the last 30 minutes of the class time. Before the participants filled out the questionnaires, the teacher researcher gave them a brief explanation about how to do this job and also assured them that their personal information and answers would be kept confidential. By this way, the researchers spent three weeks finishing collecting data from the learners' questionnaires. The collected data was subsequently tabulated to be analyzed. Learners' perceptions of TBLT were assessed using the answers they provided for different parts of the questionnaires.

#### *4.5 Data analysis*

The data analysis process consisted of two phases:

- 1) The Likert-type items of the questionnaires, which are designed to check learners' perceptions on TBLT implementation, were given a numerical score (strongly disagree =1, disagree =2, neutral=3, agree=4, and strongly agree=5).
- 2) In the open-ended items, the participants were asked to choose their own reasons for being for or against TBLT. The selected items were given the numerical score of "1" and the unselected ones "0" for the convenience of data analysis.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 was used to analyze the data. A percentage analysis of learners' answers to each of the questionnaire items was performed in order to find out how well they understand the concept task and TBLT, what perceptions they hold about TBLT and its implementation in foreign language classrooms, and for what reasons learners like or dislike TBLT implementation

## **5. Results and discussions**

### *5.1 Dealing with the first research question*

This part answers the first research question that reads: How well do English learners in China understand TBLT?

Section 2 of the questionnaire contained 8 items dealing with this question and Table 1 shows the results of learners' answers to each of the items in Section 2. For the convenience of comparison, the five-point scale responses were merged into a three-point simplified scale (strongly disagree & disagree, neutral, agree & strongly agree).

Table 1. The results of the learners' answers to Section 2 (N=166)

Questionnaire items	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	M	SD
1	6.2	5.2	88.6	4.12	0.32
2	8.8	21.3	69.9	3.78	0.35
3	11.6	18.3	69.1	3.77	0.34
4	5.5	18.4	76.1	3.98	0.37
5	22.3	12.2	65.5	3.56	0.33
6	32.5	25.6	41.9	3.39	0.39
7	16.8	31.3	51.9	3.52	0.38
8	5.5	14.3	81.2	4.05	0.33

D= strongly disagree/ disagree, A= strongly agree/ agree, U=neutral, M=mean score, SD=standard deviation.

Table 1 presents a percentage comparison of learner responses to each of the eight items that explore the key concept task and TBLT. In responses to items one through three, which describe some key properties of the concept task, most of the learners understood that task has a communicative purpose (88.6%), a primary focus on meaning (69.9%), and a clearly defined outcome (69.1%). In response to item 4, most learners (76.1%) agree that task is a kind of activity in which the target language is used by learner. Learners' answers to questions 1 through 4 indicate that the learners generally agree with the definition of task as discussed in part 2 of this paper. In response to item 5, 65.5% of the learners reported that there is a close relationship between TBLT and CLT but 22.3% do not think so, which suggests that learners are not very sure about the relationship between TBLT and CLT. Only 41.9 % of the learners believe that TBLT is based on the student-centered instructional approach when answering items 6. That is a surprising number since TBLT is claimed to a learner-centered approach to teaching and it is worth discussing in the next part. From the responses to item 7 and 8, 51.9% of the learners agree that TBLT involves three stages and are mostly (81.2%) done in group work.

For the first research question *How well do English learners in China understand TBLT?* The result is that Chinese EFL learners at the tertiary level generally have a good understanding about TBLT and its key concept 'task' and therefore, hold a positive attitude towards TBLT. According to the first research question, the analysis of items 1 through 8 manifests the fact that learners can know well the characteristics of tasks and TBLT, which demonstrates the teaching advantages and implementation form of tasks in learning a foreign language. Jeon's study (2005) well illustrates this finding by arguing that this could be the consequence of the shift that the Asian EFL context has made toward the use of a task-based and activity-oriented type of learning a language to improve the learners' communicative skills.

### 5.2 Dealing with the second research question

This part answers the second research question that reads: What are the Chinese EFL learners' perceptions on the implementation of TBLT? Section 3 of the questionnaire contained 9 items dealing with this question and Table 2 shows the result of learners' answers to each of the items in Section 3. For the convenience of comparison, the five-point scale responses were merged into a three-point simplified scale (strongly disagree & disagree, neutral, agree & strongly agree).

Table 2. The results of the learners’ answers to Section 3 (N=166)

Questionnaire items	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	M	SD
09	9.7	12.5	77.8	3.50	0.29
10	15.0	32.6	52.4	3.31	0.36
11	12.9	23.5	63.6	3.44	0.35
12	55.2	13.1	31.7	3.20	0.33
13	67.4	25.6	7.0	2.99	0.31
14	55.5	28.6	15.9	3.18	0.37
15	18.9	21.3	59.8	3.33	0.35
16	22.6	13.2	64.2	3.23	0.30
17	10.5	12.8	76.7	3.48	0.32

D= strongly disagree/ disagree, A= strongly agree/ agree, U=neutral, M=mean score, SD=standard deviation

Response to item 9 indicates that 77.8% of the learners think that TBLT provides a relaxing atmosphere for learning, which is an encouraging result for TBLT proponents in China. Items 11 to 14 are meant to deal with the relationship between TBLT and language skills, grammar and exams which are important issues for the learners taught by TBLT. Answer to item 11 suggests that 63.6% of the learners agree that TBLT can develop their integrated skills of language. But 55.2% for item 12 reported that TBLT is not concerned with their grammar and consequently 67.4% for item 13 do not think TBLT is suitable for learners who are preparing exams. Response for item 14 indicates that 55.5% learners hold the opinion that they can do a task well even if their English is not fluent and accurate, which shows learners’ confidence and interest as well in performing tasks in class. 59.8 % learners reported that TBLT is not proper for controlling classroom management and therefore, 64.2% learners think it is not useful in large classes from the responses for items 15 and 16. Most of the learners (76.7%) agree that TBLT materials should be meaningful and purposeful and has a collection with the real word.

As found out above, although generally learners hold positive perceptions on TBLT, some problems still need further discussion below.

*5.2.1 TBLT and classroom management*

The first is the classroom management, especially in large classes. TBLT offers a new approach to language which is quite different from the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) model. The change in teaching approach poses great challenges in classroom management. Littlewood (2007) points out that CLT and TBLT create problems of classroom management. The familiar ‘PPP’ sequence represents not only a way of ‘delivering’ the language specified in the syllabus but also a way of controlling the interaction in class. A concern voiced by many teachers is that when students are engaged in independent, task-related work, this control no longer operates. As Li (2004) describes, it is very difficult for a teacher to give appropriate timely guidance to individuals or groups in such large classes. Sometimes, teachers have to stop whole class discussions and ask the rest of the students who still want to speak to discuss their ideas after class or write down their comments in their homework. A way out of this problem is suggested by (Jeon & Hahn, 2006) that for large classes, EFL teachers probably allow for group formation and presentation processes in which task-based techniques are employed similarly like in small classes, except that large classes may occupy more time and preparation.

5.2.2 TBLT and grammar, examination and the traditional belief to language learning

55.2% for item 12 reported that TBLT is not concerned with their grammar and consequently 67.4% for item 13 do not think TBLT is suitable for learners who are preparing exams. The findings indicate that although learners are generally in favor of TBLT, they are still not confident in TBLT’s role for grammar and exams. What is implied in this finding also accords with the fact that most of these learners hold the traditional teaching belief that grammar and learning for exams are crucial elements in language learning. The findings are in consistent with what Deng & Carless (2010) and Littlewood (2007) claim that examinations are often seen as a barrier to the implementation in schools of such as communicative or task-based approaches. Although tasks allow learners to choose the language needed to achieve the outcome of the task and learners are given the freedom to decide which grammatical items to use, the result is that tasks may not meet this need. Ellis (2003) admitted that students often regard communicative tasks as opportunities for communication rather than learning. As an advantage of TBLT, Willis (1996: 147) states that “the role of tasks is to encourage learners to activate and use whatever language they already have, both for comprehension and for speaking and writing”, and “it provides learners with the motivation to improve and build on whatever language they already have” (1996:1). This statement is consistent with the research findings from items 9, 10 and 11 in Section 3.

In the Chinese EFL context, many students study English as a compulsory school course rather than as a practical language, and their aim is just to get higher scores in competitive examinations in which accuracy-focused written tests are seen as a key factor affecting teaching and learning. The solution to this problem is the contextual adaptations of TBLT which may involve some form of merging the global with localized methodologies (Littlewood, 2011). Implicit in such perspectives is the need for inclusive non-doctrinaire approaches to TBLT. TBLT helps to approach the acquisition of grammatical form in a different way from the traditional PPP model to a more explicit teacher-fronted explanation practiced by teachers in Chinese EFL context, for example, teachers can use focused tasks in TBLT classrooms.

5.3 Dealing with the third research question

This part answers the third research question that reads: Why do English learners in China like, or dislike the implementation of TBLT? For this section, they could only choose “Yes” or choose “No”. If they answered ‘Yes’, they had to tick any one or all of the five reasons that followed, but if they answered ‘No’, they had six reasons to choose from. Table 3 shows the number of reasons learners chose for their favor over TBLT and Table 4 the number of reasons learners chose for their dislike towards TBLT.

Table 3. Reasons why English learners like the implementation of TBLT (N=102)

Reason No.	Learner number	Percentage( Learner number/N) (%)
1	32	31
2	66	65
3	55	54
4	78	76
5	86	84

Table 3 indicates that 102 learners out of the 166 participants chose to show their like towards TBLT. That means 61% of all the participants chosen for the present study are in favor of the implementation of TBLT. Table 3 points out that the biggest reason (84%) is TBLT is appropriate for small group work, which suggests that these learners like to have small group work when TBLT is implemented in class. Reason 4 *TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment* attracted 76% of the learners’ votes, which shows that they paid much attention to their learning environment in which communication could happen.



Reason two *TBLT improve learners' interaction skills* attracted 65%, while reason 3 *TBLT encourages learners' intrinsic motivation* 54% of the “yes” votes. Reason 1 *TBLT promotes learners' academic progress* only attracted 31% of the “yes” votes, which is a comparatively lower number. The possible reason is that most learners may define “*academic progress*” in a narrow sense to be the achievement in exam score or they may not be very confident in TBLT in promoting their linguistic competence except the development of communicative abilities. Therefore, how to improve learners' full language development and their confidence as well by using TBLT remains a question for teachers to consider in the future.

The number of reasons and the percentage for those learners who chose “No” is offered in Table 4 as follows.

Table 4. Reasons why English learners dislike the implementation of TBLT (N=64)

Reason No.	Learner number	Percentage( Learner number/N) (%)
1	58	90
2	45	70
3	62	97
4	55	86
5	22	34

Table 4 offers us important findings concerning the reasons for learners' dislike on TBLT. Reason 3 *Large class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods* attracted most of the “No” votes (97%). This finding is consistent with that for the “yes” votes (84%), which means that learners like to have small group work and large class size is truly a problem for the use of TBLT. Reason 1 *Students are not used to task-based language learning* attracted the second biggest votes (90%) for not implementing TBLT. Reason 4 *I have difficulty in assessing my own performance* attracted 86% of the learners' votes and reason 2 *Materials in textbook are not proper for using TBLT* 70%. Reason 5 *Teachers have very little knowledge of task-based instruction* was chosen by 34% of the learners, a relatively lower number to indicate that they are confident with teacher' expertise in TBLT.

The result for the third research question is that learners who prefer TBLT outnumber those who do not. The majority of learners like TBLT because of its implementation form, in other words, learners like to have small group activities in which they can use the target language freely for communication. They also believe that TBLT can promote their motivation for learning.

A comparatively fewer number of learners showed their dislike to TBLT. The biggest reason for their dislike is that large class size poses an obstacle to conduct TBLT. According to their reports, in big classes, classroom management can be a problem. When we consider the fact that the English class size in China is usually very big, this finding is truly worth discussing in the future. The second important reason is that they are not used to such a learner-centered classroom teaching in which they may find it difficult to do tasks by themselves. This finding is not surprising since the traditional language class in China has long been a teacher-centered one. Learners also reported that it would be difficult for them to assess task performance, which suggests that Chinese learners are quite used to standard tests. How to assess task performance becomes a problem for them, of course for teachers as well.

## 6. Conclusions and implications

The present research is significant in that it puts learners to the front ground. This research approaches several important issues of TBLT from learners' perspective. Results show that mostly Chinese EFL learners can have a good understanding about TBLT, especially for those learners at the tertiary level.

They generally hold positive attitudes and perceptions towards TBLT and therefore, most of the learners like to carry out TBLT in their English class teaching.

Language tasks in TBLT can be very useful to provide an interesting context in which learners develop their communicative competence mainly through the form of small group activities. Although TBLT is welcome by most of the learners in China, the problems revealed by the findings of this research are still many, among which the class size, class management, the development of learners' language grammar, the preparations for exams, and even their belief in language learning are the most important concerns for the learners in Chinese EFL context. Learners' perceptions play an important role to decide the success of language teaching. Therefore, their attitudes and perceptions should be considered seriously by the language teachers and curriculum designers in China.

It is true that TBLT, which rooted out of the Western learning culture, continues to attract people's attention. However, as this approach does not take sufficient account of the particular English learning environment in China, how to bring about the biggest potential of TBLT remains a question for people to consider. When we are designing communicative tasks, we should consider learners' learning needs and put them in a relaxing situation where they can use English for real communication and their language development.

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**Appendix**

This questionnaire is designed to examine Chinese EFL learners’ attitudes and perceptions of Task-based language teaching (TBLT) with reference to classroom practice. I would be very grateful for your time to read and provide an answer for each of the items in the questionnaire. Your personal information and answers for the questions will be kept confidential. Thank you for cooperation.

**Section 1. General information and demographic information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)  
 Major: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)  
 Gender:         Male    Female  
 Language level:  low     average    high

**Section 2. Learners’ understandings of tasks and TBLT**

For each of the following statements, please answer by putting a √ in a box, according to the following scale:

SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree)

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. A task is communicative goal directed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. A task has a clearly defined outcome.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. A task is any activity in which the target language is used by the learner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. TBLT is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. TBLT is based on the student-centered instructional approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. TBLT includes three stages: pre-task, task implementation, and post-task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Tasks are always done in pairs or groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section 3. Learners’ perceptions on implementing TBLT**

The following statements address learners’ perceptions on implementing TBLT in the classroom. Please answer by putting a √ in the box that matches your perception most based on the following scale:

SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree)

Questionnaire Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. TBLT provides a relaxing atmosphere to promote the target language use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. TBLT activates learners’ motivation in learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. TBLT pursues the development of integrated skills in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. TBLT recognizes the importance of grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. TBLT is suitable for learners who are preparing for an exam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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14. Learners will not be able to do a task unless their English is fully fluent and accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. TBLT is not proper for controlling classroom arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. TBLT is not useful in large classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. TBLT materials should be meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**Section 4. Reasons learners like or dislike TBLT**

Do you like the implementation of TBLT in your English classroom? (Only choose one option that best suits you)

Yes    No

If yes, please put a √ for any reasons that you think best matches your position.

- 
- TBLT promotes learners’ academic progress.
  - TBLT improve learners’ interaction skills.
  - TBLT encourages learners’ intrinsic motivation.
  - TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment.
  - TBLT is appropriate for small group work.

If you have other reasons, please write them down.

( \_\_\_\_\_ )

If no, please put a √ for any reasons that you think best matches your position.

- 
- Students are not used to task-based language learning.
  - Materials in textbook are not proper for using TBLT.
  - Large class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods.
  - I have difficulty in assessing my own performance.
  - Teachers have very little knowledge of task-based instruction.

If you have other reasons, please write them down.

( \_\_\_\_\_ )