

A Study of Internationally-certified Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Principles

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Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) promotes interactive learning through communicative tasks, diverging from traditional grammar-focused methods. Though widely adopted globally, its perception among internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers remains underexplored. This qualitative study examines how 30 CELTA- or TESOL-certified teachers from private Iranian language institutes perceive TBLT. Textbook-driven instruction dominates in Iran, though certain textbooks feature task-based approaches, posing challenges to TBLT's consistent application. Through content analysis of semi-structured interviews, the study uncovered key themes. Findings reveal that teachers appreciate TBLT for boosting student motivation and communicative competence, with CELTA and TESOL training enhancing their

skills in task design and confidence in implementation. Still, difficulties arise in adapting TBLT for low-proficiency learners and balancing meaning with form. To effectively integrate TBLT into Iranian EFL contexts, the study underscores the need for targeted professional development, curriculum adjustments, and institutional support, equipping teachers with practical tools for communicative teaching.

Keywords: Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), Professional Development, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Task

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been formed as an approach wherein learners are allowed to communicate language use through tasks due to the limitations of the traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice, and Production) approach (Ellis 2003, 63-103). As put by Douglas and Kim (2014, 1–22), in this approach, language learning is considered a developmental process through which learners' communication and interaction can be promoted so that they can use the target language naturally when exposed to activities. "This trend has developed into a practical framework for the communicative classroom in which the learners perform task-based activities through the cycles of pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task feedback" (Skehan, 2014, 68). Task-Based Language Teaching has a long history and holds a central place in current language acquisition research and also in language pedagogy in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Loewen 2022, 137–145). Therefore, the existing literature on this issue is rich and the effect of different

task types on learning English has been addressed by the researchers in the field. More particularly, in the context of Iran, the importance of TBLT, as an inevitable aspect of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), is added due to the fact that in many language institutes, English textbooks such as *New Interchange*, and *Top Notch* are utilized wherein task-based activities are used (Mahdavi-rad 2017, 14–21).

The impact of international certification courses on experienced English teachers' classroom practices has been noted in the literature. Initial certification courses (ICCs), such as the Cambridge CELTA and TESOL, are designed to teach English as a foreign or second language worldwide, equipping teachers with essential teaching skills to effectively work with adult learners (Anderson 2020, 1–14). In a recent exploratory study, Mousavi, Rajabi, and Khalaji (2024, 303–336) investigated the influence of CELTA and TESOL certification on non-native English teachers' practical teaching knowledge and their efficacy perceptions. The study revealed that before completing these certification programs, many Iranian EFL teachers showed diverse, predominantly teacher-centered approaches in their classrooms. They faced challenges in areas like classroom management and addressing student needs and lacked formal training in practical teaching techniques. However, following the certification programs, the teachers reported significant improvements in their teaching practices and self-efficacy perceptions. Their pedagogical approaches shifted toward student-centered methods, incorporating a range of instructional strategies and improving classroom management. Moreover, the study highlighted the importance of continuous professional development, which was fostered by the certification programs, leading to increased confidence among teachers in their ability to effectively facilitate learning.

The present study builds on this literature by exploring the perceptions of internationally certified Iranian EFL teachers regarding TBLT principles. It aims to examine

whether the CELTA and TESOL courses have had any impact on their understanding and application of TBLT, considering the transformative potential of such certifications in bridging gaps in practical teaching knowledge. To achieve this goal, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: What are internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles?

RQ2: Have CELTA and TESOL courses had any effect on internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles?

Literature review

This study is theoretically rooted in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT was brought into teaching profession by Prabhu (1987). He defined a task as an activity where learners use the process of thinking to come up with an outcome from the inputs they receive. In TBLT approach, students are permitted to act at their own speed and level and area of interest. It puts aside a fixed developmental sequence and allows learner freedom and autonomy in the learning process (Ellis 2003). He argues that TBLT helps learners progress more rapidly and use their new foreign language in real-world circumstances with a reasonable level of efficiency.

TBLT and Language Teaching/Learning advantages and complexities

Ellis (2006, 83–107) provided a TBLT framework that can be used in teaching practice and this framework mainly consists of three main phases. The primary stage is the “pre-task” that consists of the different practices that teachers and pupils can do before starting the

task. Some of these practices may be requesting and replying questions or reading a text according to the subject, so that learners can be familiarized with authentic language conditions. The second stage, i.e. task cycle or “during-task”, occurs when the task is chosen and learners participate in completing the purposes of the task. The eventual stage is “post-task” which contains mostly language concentration, that is to say, language subjects are mostly coped with in this stage.

Task-Based Language Teaching brings a number of advantages to help foreign language learning. Ellis (2009) named these advantages along these lines:

a) TBLT gives the chance for ‘natural’ learning in the classroom context, b) it concentrates on semantics over structure; nevertheless, it can also accentuate learning structure, c) it recommends learners a fertile input of target language, d) it is intrinsically motivating, e) it aligns with a learner-centered educational philosophy while also allowing for teacher input and guidance, f) it leads to the development of interactive fluency while not ignoring correctness, and g) it can be utilized together with a more conventional method.

Although task-based approach provides many advantages to help foreign language learning, it is not without some difficulties and complexities. As stated by Hasnain and Halder (2021, 208–222), some complexities of task-based approach are along these lines:

a) The drawbacks of task-based learning rely not so much on the potential effectiveness of this type of instructional content but on problems of conducting the instruction,

b) Task-based learning includes a high degree of innovation and efficacy in the domain of the teacher. If teachers are restricted to more traditional roles or do not possess the time and resources to provide task-based teaching, this type of teaching may be impractical.

c) Task-based learning necessitates resources beyond the textbooks and related materials generally available in foreign language classrooms.

d) students may, at first, refuse or object to task-based language learning in that this type of instruction is not what many students expect and want from a language class.

e) some learners employ the mother tongue when they face a difficulty or if the group feels intolerant.

f) some individuals enhance superior communication strategies, e.g., expressing and utilizing gestures, but get by using just unusual vocabulary and expressions and allow others to bring the more demanding language they require. This may lead to the fossilization of these individuals' language skills before they progress much further in the grammar of the target language challenges and complexities, one of which is the prevalence of grammar-focused instruction in English language textbooks. While these textbooks incorporate some key aspects of pedagogical grammar—such as both implicit and explicit instruction, and attention to the relationship between form, meaning, and use—they often neglect the principles of communicative language teaching and meaningful communicative tasks (Khani, Davari Ardekani, and Bahrami 2023, 33–56). This lack of alignment with communicative approaches may contribute to teachers' reluctance to adopt TBLT in their classrooms, as they perceive a mismatch between the principles of TBLT and the textbooks they are required to use.

International Certifications and TBLT: Relevance to Teacher Development

International certifications such as CELTA and TESOL play a crucial role in the professional development of language teachers. These programs often emphasize communicative language teaching (CLT) and learner-centered approaches, which align closely with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Both CELTA and TESOL aim to equip teachers with the practical skills and pedagogical knowledge necessary to create effective, dynamic, and interactive language learning environments. In particular, these certifications stress the importance of incorporating real-world tasks that engage learners in meaningful communication, mirroring TBLT's focus on authentic language use and learner autonomy (Richards 2015, 1–18).

Alofi and Almalki (2022, 14–31) argue that while CELTA and TESOL are not explicitly centered around TBLT, they often incorporate elements of task-based methodologies. For example, CELTA candidates are trained to design and implement activities that encourage language learners to use language for communicative purposes, moving beyond rote learning and grammar drills. TESOL certification programs also include task-oriented lessons that require learners to actively use language in context, thereby fostering greater fluency and cognitive engagement. Teachers who are trained under these certifications are often well-prepared to integrate TBLT principles into their teaching practices, creating more interactive, student-centered classrooms.

According to Mousavi, Rajabi, and Khalaji (2024, 303–336), CELTA and TESOL certifications significantly impact non-native English teachers' practical teaching knowledge. These certifications enhance teachers' ability to apply task-based methodologies effectively, although challenges may arise in fully adapting to TBLT's more complex approaches.

The Influence of TBLT on Teacher Certification Programs

Challenges still remain in fully integrating TBLT into such programs. The reliance on standardized frameworks and testing in certification programs like CELTA and TESOL may restrict the ability to introduce more innovative, task-based methodologies, especially when these methods are not immediately measurable through conventional assessment tools (Nunan 2004). Nevertheless, the growing recognition of TBLT's effectiveness in fostering meaningful communication in the classroom is likely to continue influencing the evolution of teacher certification programs, encouraging greater integration of task-based practices in teacher education.

As noted by Mousavi, Rajabi, and Khalaji (2024, 303-336), while CELTA and TESOL programs have significantly enhanced teachers' practical teaching knowledge, further efforts are needed to incorporate TBLT in a more comprehensive way. This ongoing integration of task-based approaches within teacher certification programs can help better align these programs with the communicative goals of TBLT.

Memory Enhancement and Cognitive Benefits in TBLT

Research has highlighted the cognitive benefits of Task-Based language teaching (TBLT), which promotes memory enhancement and supports effective language acquisition. Akbari, Shobeiri, and Ashtiyani (2024, 279–280) emphasize the importance of incorporating literature, particularly dramatic texts, within language teaching, noting that such integration significantly improves memory retention and cognitive processes. This aligns with TBLT's focus on engaging learners in real-world tasks that require active cognitive engagement. According to the authors, dramatic literature, with its complexity and depth, can provide

more effective memory retention compared to simpler forms of literature, suggesting that tasks involving intellectually stimulating content offer similar cognitive benefits.

In addition to literary texts, TBLT often includes problem-solving tasks, which are particularly effective in developing learners' cognitive abilities. These tasks encourage critical thinking, decision-making, and the application of language in complex scenarios, fostering deeper cognitive processing. By involving learners in tasks that require problem-solving, TBLT not only enhances their language skills but also stimulates cognitive functions that are essential for vocabulary retention and language fluency. This highlights the dual benefit of TBLT: it promotes both meaningful communication and cognitive development, making it a powerful approach for improving language learning outcomes.

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Methodology

Design

In line with the objective of the present study, that is, exploring internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles, a qualitative content analysis design (Ary et al. 2019) was used. In this type of design, the content of materials or documents including texts, interviews, observation descriptions, and so on are analyzed

Participants and Instruments

The participants of this study consisted of 30 Iranian EFL teachers (both male and female) from those teachers teaching in private language institutes in different cities of Iran. They were selected through purposive sampling because they were CELTA or TESOL holders.

These qualifications ensure a standardized level of training in communicative language teaching methodologies. The inclusion of both CELTA and TESOL holders allowed for a diverse yet comparable group of teachers with internationally recognized teaching credentials, aligning with the study's aim to explore perspectives grounded in formal teacher training. They were in the 35–65 age range. In fact, due to the qualitative nature of the study, the number of participants was not predetermined. To be more specific, data saturation (the point where no new information was obtained) was achieved with this number of interviewees. Table 1 gives brief demographic information of the participants.

Table 1. *Brief demographic information of participants*

Category	Details
Number of participants	30
Nationality	Iranian
Gender	Male and Female
Age range	35–65 years old
Occupation	EFL teachers
Workplace	Private Language Institutes in Various cities
Selection method	Purposive Sampling
Qualification	CELTA or TESOL
Education level	BA(n=10), MA(n=15), PhD(n=5)
Teaching experience	3–20 years
Sampling rationale	Based on data saturation in a qualitative study

The participants were made aware of the purpose of the study. In addition, they were assured that the data would be kept confidential and their responses to the interview would not affect their job status at all. This study benefited from qualitative content analysis of semi-structured interview data. The interview questions were developed based on consultation with previous research and domain experts to ensure content validity. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of EFL teachers to refine the

questions for clarity and relevance. The interview consisted of five open-ended questions (see the Appendix). The language of the interview was English.

Procedure

At the outset of the study, the sample was selected from the target population through purposive sampling. Considering the research ethics, at first, consent of the authorities and the participants was taken by the researchers. Moreover, all the participants were told that their participation is completely voluntary and there is no obligation.

After sample selection and observing the issues related to the research ethics, the interviews were taken by the researchers through social networks including WhatsApp and Telegram applications for the convenience of the interviewees. Each interview was taken individually in English. There was no time limit for the interviews so that the interviewees could reveal their full perceptions. All interview sessions were audio-taped for transcription and further analysis. Then, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed to create verbatim written data for analysis. Then, the transcribed version was subjected to coding (open, axial and selective) to identify the recurring patterns, themes, categories and sub-categories among obtained data.

For the purpose of credibility and dependability of interview data, low-inference descriptors and member checking were used. Here, using low-inference descriptors means presenting direct quotations from the interviews which allow the reader to experience the participants' world by seeing the actual words of the respondents (Ary et al. 2019).

Using member checks involves the researcher's sharing their interpretations of the data with the participants to avoid any miscommunication, identify inaccurate interpretations, and show courtesy to the participants by letting them read what has been

written about them. In member checks, the researcher gets feedback from the participants about the study's findings (Ary et al. 2019).

Study Context

The study was conducted within the context of private language institutes in Iran, where English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction is commonly delivered through textbooks like *New Interchange* and *Top Notch*. These textbooks often incorporate task-based activities, aligning with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). However, despite the growing recognition of TBLT globally, Iranian EFL education remains heavily reliant on traditional teacher-centered approaches, which tend to emphasize grammar instruction and focus less on communicative language use. This study aimed to explore how internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers—those holding certificates such as CELTA and TESOL—perceive and apply TBLT within this context.

Private language institutes in Iran were selected because they serve as key sites for English language instruction outside of formal educational institutions. Teachers at these institutes often hold CELTA or TESOL certifications, which are internationally recognized qualifications that emphasize communicative teaching methodologies, including task-based and learner-centered approaches. This provided a unique opportunity to examine the ways in which these teachers' perceptions and teaching practices align with the principles of TBLT, particularly after receiving training through internationally recognized certification programs.

The participants, a total of 30 CELTA and TESOL-certified Iranian EFL teachers, represented a diverse group in terms of age (ranging from 35 to 65 years), teaching experience, and geographical location across various cities in Iran. These teachers were

selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the study focused on individuals who had undergone significant training in TBLT and had experience teaching within the Iranian EFL context. The use of purposive sampling was crucial in gathering data from participants whose backgrounds and training could offer relevant insights into the adoption and challenges of TBLT in a region where traditional methods dominate.

By focusing on these internationally-certified teachers, the study aimed to bridge the gap between global trends in language teaching and local teaching practices in Iran. The study context is significant because it reflects the tensions between traditional methods and the more communicative, learner-centered approaches advocated by TBLT, especially as experienced by teachers who have received formal training from CELTA and TESOL programs.

In line with best practices for qualitative research, this study adheres to the tradition of contextually grounded data collection and analysis, ensuring that the findings are reflective of both the international training standards and the local educational realities faced by Iranian EFL teachers. Understanding how these teachers perceive and apply TBLT in their classrooms, despite challenges in the broader educational context, provides valuable insights into the effectiveness and adaptability of TBLT in diverse educational settings.

Data analysis

For the purpose of data analysis, the content of interview data were qualitatively analyzed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. To this end, first, the interview data was transcribed by the researchers to create verbatim written data for analysis. Then, the transcribed version was subjected to coding (open, axial and selective) to identify the recurring patterns, themes, categories and sub-categories among obtained data.

The first step in data analysis was reading and re-reading the data to organize and transcribe them (Ary et al. 2019). After organizing the data, the next stage was codifying the raw data, and hence, reducing them into manageable codes. In this stage, a considerable number of codes emerged. Once the coding of the transcripts was completed, the next step was assigning similar codes under certain categories and in order to ensure if the codes belong to the same categories, two more colleagues double-checked them. At last, selective coding was employed to generate a grounded theory by interpreting the interrelationships that emerge among categories in axial coding (Creswell and Poth 2024). The aforementioned steps led to the emergence of the main themes.

Grounded Theory Coding was used throughout the study to ensure that the categories emerged directly from the data. We followed the iterative process of constantly comparing incidents in the data, adjusting and refining codes and categories as we gathered new data. This grounded approach enabled us to develop a theory that was deeply rooted in participants' experiences rather than pre-established frameworks.

The constant comparative method was employed throughout the study to ensure that each new piece of data was compared with previous data. This iterative comparison allowed us to refine codes and categories until no new significant information emerged, indicating that saturation had been reached. We continued data collection until new interviews no longer contributed additional insights, confirming the adequacy of our sample.

Results and Discussion

Results of the first research question

In answering the first research question 'What are internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles?', the following themes were extracted from the interviews:

- **Ambiguity of teachers' role in TBLT**

In the words of participant 3 (P3):

The role of teachers is not explicitly determined in TBLT. This causes difficulties for teachers in implementing TBLT.

According to P14:

The biggest problem of TBLT is that teachers' position is not well clarified. It is really vague to teachers.

Explanation: Teachers find their role in TBLT unclear, making implementation challenging due to a lack of explicit guidance.

- **Difficulty of TBLT implementation in low-proficiency groups**

As put by P19:

Language proficiency of some learners is very limited. This leads to lack of cooperation on their part in operationalizing TBLT.

According to P4 (male):

A main concern is learners' low proficiency level. This makes implementing TBLT more difficult for teachers.

Explanation: Low-proficiency learners may struggle to engage in task-based activities, leading to a lack of cooperation and making TBLT implementation more challenging for

teachers. Without proper scaffolding, these students may find it difficult to complete tasks effectively.

- **Challenge of designing tasks for different aspects of English language**

According to P23:

One thing which is very dissatisfying in using TBLT is designing appropriate tasks to teach some dimensions of English. I myself cannot find good jigsaw tasks to teach phrasal verbs.

As perceived by P1:

Tasks do not lend themselves well to teaching some parts of language including proverbs, idioms, etc.

Explanation: This highlights a common challenge among teachers using TBLT: finding suitable tasks, particularly jigsaw tasks, for teaching complex language aspects like phrasal verbs. The difficulty in designing effective tasks can limit the applicability of TBLT in certain areas of language instruction.

- **Difficulty of learner evaluation with TBLT**

P20 stated that:

Students' learning and performance cannot be easily evaluated by TBLT. It seems that TBLT is more appropriate for teaching than assessment procedures.

As mentioned by P6:

Inapplicability of TBLT in evaluation of students' learning is the main challenge of utilizing TBLT. Even if it is possible to use TBLT for assessment purposes, it will be very time-consuming.

Explanation: Evaluating learners in TBLT is challenging, as it is better suited for teaching than assessment, and using it for evaluation can be time-consuming.

- **Teachers' unfamiliarity with TBLT**

According to P24:

Many teachers are not familiar with TBLT and how to implement it in their classes.

Thus, they cannot benefit from the potentials of TBLT. It is recommended that authorities hold consciousness-raising programs for teachers to make them aware of TBLT principles.

As mentioned by P28:

A big problem existing on the way of TBLT is teachers' unfamiliarity with it. This is why they still follow traditional teaching methods in line with transmission view of teaching.

Explanation: Teachers' unfamiliarity with TBLT limits its use, and raising awareness through programs could help shift away from traditional methods.

- **TBLT makes learners more motivated**

As explained by P16:

TBLT contributes to enhancement of learners' motivation. Learners become more and more eager to learn English as a result of using TBLT in English classes.

In the words of P8:

Experiences and empirical studies support the effectiveness of TBLT on learners' motivation. This is of high importance given that motivation plays a significant role in English learning.

Explanation: TBLT enhances learners' motivation, making them more eager to learn English, as supported by both participant 16 and participant 8, who highlighted its positive impact on motivation, crucial for language learning.

- **TBLT makes learners more engaged and active**

In the saying of P13:

In my opinion, as learners are exposed to TBLT, their engagement is increased. They participate more in class activities.

As put by P15:

I believe that students' involvement in class activities is corroborated by using TBLT in classes. They become more active in classes where TBLT is used. This is not the case in mainstream classes.

Explanation: TBLT increases learner engagement and activity, as participants 13 and 15 noted. They observed that students become more involved and active in TBLT-based classes compared to traditional ones.

- **TBLT increases learner communicative ability**

As stated by P25:

Because TBLT necessitates communicative activities by learners, it leads to strengthening their communication skills. This has been documented by researchers in the field.

In the perception of P10:

A clear advantage of TBLT is its focus on communication skills, which is super important in today's global village where people communicate in all sorts of areas.

Explanation: TBLT enhances learners' communicative ability, as noted by participants 25 and 10. They emphasized that TBLT's focus on communicative activities strengthens communication skills, which is crucial in today's globalized world.

- **TBLT leads to more negotiations among learners**

According to P3:

What is interesting about TBLT is that it involves negotiation of meaning among learners. In most of the tasks, the focus is on meaning negotiation.

As mentioned by P18:

When students are involved in various tasks, they are required to negotiate with their peers to reach the task outcome. This negotiation with group mates has positive effects on language skills of learners.

Explanation: TBLT encourages meaning negotiation among learners, as noted by participants 3 and 18. Through task involvement, students engage in peer negotiations, which positively impacts their language skills.

- **TBLT reduces teacher dependency on textbooks**

As put by P11:

I think a strong point about TBLT is that teachers become less dependent on textbooks in teaching English. Textbooks, as I see them, to some extent deskill teachers. I know quite a few teachers whose creativity in teaching has been suffocated due to their sheer dependency on textbooks. TBLT is a blessing in this regard.

As commented by P7:

I believe hiring TBLT requires less attention to the fixed principles of textbooks. By nature, TBLT means putting textbooks aside. Therefore, teachers feel free to practice new principles of TBLT.

Explanation: TBLT reduces teacher dependence on textbooks, as participants 11 and 7 noted. It allows teachers to move beyond fixed textbook principles, fostering creativity and freedom to implement new teaching methods.

- **TBLT enhances learner meaning making**

According to P30:

Meaning is the main component of TBLT. More specifically, searching for meaning is an inseparable aspect of almost all kinds of tasks. Therefore, learners become rich in meaning making by TBLT.

As mentioned by P5:

Tasks are more oriented towards meaning-based learning rather than form-based one. To rightly do different kinds of tasks, learners should make meaning. This causes remarkable improvements in their meaning making ability.

Explanation: TBLT enhances learners' meaning-making abilities, as noted by participants 30 and 5. The focus on meaning in tasks encourages learners to engage in deeper meaning-making, leading to significant improvements.

- TBLT makes learner goal-oriented

As perceived by P16:

Since tasks are purposeful activities which reach an end, the role of goals is dominant in TBLT. Consequently, TBLT makes goals noticeable in the minds of learners.

As stated by P29:

Through TBLT, it is taught to learners that everything should be terminated with a goal. Ends of tasks give meaning to tasks. In this way, learners become oriented towards having a goal.

Explanation: TBLT makes learners goal-oriented, as participants 16 and 29 observed. The purposeful nature of tasks emphasizes goals, helping learners focus on achieving outcomes and giving meaning to their learning activities.

- **TBLT makes classes more learner-centered**

In the words of P20:

In classes where TBLT is used, teachers are not at the center as is the case in traditional classes. Their role changes from class boss to guide. In contrast, the role of learners is more significant in TBLT. In a word, TBLT is a game changer when it comes to learner-centeredness. All in all, where TBLT is effectively implemented, language teachers are no longer a sage on the stage but a guide on the side.

According to P17:

There is no place for teacher-centeredness in TBLT. TBLT is here to change the fixed structure of classes in which teacher is everything. In TBLT, classes are turned around students' involvement, cooperation, participation and engagement.

Explanation: TBLT shifts the focus from teacher-centeredness to learner-

centeredness, as noted by participants 20 and 17. In TBLT classrooms, teachers act as guides rather than central figures, with learners taking a more active role in their involvement, cooperation, and engagement.

- **TBLT makes language teaching more authentic**

As stated by P9:

In TBLT, real-life situations are reconstructed. At least, this is sought as an aim in TBLT, even if not fully achieved. This makes TBLT classes more authentic.

As put by P23:

TBLT is concerned with putting students in simulations of real-life situations. This is done so that learners can cope with language use situations to which they are confronted out of classes.

Explanation: TBLT makes language teaching more authentic by simulating real-life situations, as noted by participants 9 and 23. These simulations help learners prepare for real-world language use, even if fully authentic scenarios are not always achievable.

- **TBLT enhances learner autonomy**

The following opinion was held by P15:

Thanks to TBLT, learners' dependency on teachers is reduced. They become more independent and powerful by having negotiations with classmates. I believe that TBLT makes them more autonomous.

Explanation: TBLT enhances learner autonomy by reducing dependency on teachers, as noted by participant 15. Learners become more independent and empowered through peer negotiations and task-based activities.

The first five themes can be categorized as the disadvantages of TBLT. They are demonstrated in Figure 1.

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Themes 6 to 15 can be categorized as the advantages of TBLT. Figure 2 shows them.

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Table 2 shows the summary of findings for the first research question.

Table 2. Summary of findings for the first question

Theme	Explanation
Ambiguity of teachers' role in TBLT	Teachers find their role unclear in TBLT, making implementation challenging.
Difficulty of TBLT implementation in low-proficiency groups	Low-proficiency learners struggle to engage in tasks, complicating TBLT's use.
Challenge of designing tasks for different aspects of English language	Teachers face difficulty designing appropriate tasks, especially for complex language aspects like phrasal verbs.
Difficulty of learner evaluation with TBLT	TBLT is better suited for teaching than assessment, and evaluating learners through it can be time-consuming.
Teachers' unfamiliarity with TBLT	Many teachers are not familiar with TBLT and need awareness programs to implement it effectively.
TBLT makes learners more motivated	TBLT increases learner motivation and eagerness to learn English.
TBLT makes learners more engaged and active	TBLT increases learner engagement and participation in class activities.

TBLT increases learner communicative ability <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT strengthens learners' communication skills through its emphasis on communicative activities. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT leads to more negotiations among learners <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT fosters peer-to-peer negotiation of meaning, benefiting language skills. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT reduces teacher dependency on textbooks <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT encourages teachers to be less reliant on textbooks, fostering creativity. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT enhances learner meaning making <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT tasks encourage deeper meaning-making, improving learners' meaning construction abilities. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT makes learner goal-oriented <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT's goal-oriented tasks help learners focus on achieving clear outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT makes classes more learner-centered <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT shifts focus from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching. <input type="checkbox"/>
TBLT makes language teaching more authentic <input type="checkbox"/>	TBLT simulates real-life situations, making language teaching more authentic. <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> TBLT enhances learner autonomy <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> TBLT reduces learner dependency on teachers, encouraging autonomy and independence. <input type="checkbox"/>

Results of the second research question

In an attempt to answer the second research question 'Have CELTA and TESOL courses had any effect on internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles?', the following themes were extracted from the interviews:

- **CELTA and TESOL increase knowledge of tasks**

According to P7:

Before the CELTA course, my knowledge of different task types was very limited. I didn't know more than two tasks. As a consequence of this course, my awareness of various tasks was increased.

As put by P15:

TESOL added to my consciousness of tasks by emphasis on task implementation. It increased my knowledge of tasks noticeably.

Explanation: CELTA and TESOL courses enhance teachers' knowledge of tasks, as noted by participants 7 and 15. These courses expand awareness of different task types and emphasize task implementation, leading to a significant increase in task-related knowledge.

- **CELTA and TESOL change attitudes towards TBLT**

As perceived by P6:

CELTA contributed to positive attitudes about TBLT. Having passed this course, I got more positive feelings about usefulness of TBLT.

According to P27:

I experienced significant changes in attitudes towards how tasks can affect teaching and learning after TESOL. To tell the truth, TESOL had an enlightening role.

Explanation: CELTA and TESOL courses positively change teachers' attitudes towards TBLT, as participants 6 and 27 noted. These courses foster a greater appreciation for the usefulness of TBLT and its impact on teaching and learning.

- **CELTA and TESOL make TBLT implementation easier**

In the opinion of P21:

Although I had theoretical knowledge of different classifications of tasks, I did not know much about implementing them. This means that my practical knowledge was low. CELTA led to an increase in my knowledge of TBLT implementation.

In the words of P16:

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As you know, procedural knowledge is different from basic knowledge. TESOL role in upgrading my procedural knowledge about TBLT cannot be neglected. I really did not know much about practicing TBLT before TESOL course.

Explanation: CELTA and TESOL courses make TBLT implementation easier by increasing teachers' practical knowledge, as noted by participants 21 and 16. These courses help bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of TBLT.

- **CELTA and TESOL increase motivation to use TBLT**

As worded by P1:

I should say that CELTA motivated me to apply TBLT in teaching English. I was not that much eager to use TBLT. During the course, I became interested in TBLT.

P19 stated that:

When you know how to do a task, your motivation to use it is increased. TESOL made me motivated to take advantage of TBLT by letting me know how to perform different tasks.

Explanation: CELTA and TESOL courses increase motivation to use TBLT, as noted by participants 1 and 19. These courses not only enhance understanding of task implementation but also spark a greater interest in applying TBLT in teaching.

Figure 3 shows the major themes on the effects of CELTA and TESOL courses on Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT

Pre-print Version

Pre-print Version

Table 3 shows the summary of findings for the second research question

Table 3. Summary of findings for the second question

Theme	Explanation
CELTA and TESOL increase knowledge of tasks <input type="checkbox"/>	CELTA and TESOL courses significantly improve teachers' knowledge of various tasks and their implementation.
CELTA and TESOL change attitude towards TBLT <input type="checkbox"/>	These courses foster more positive attitudes towards TBLT and its usefulness.
CELTA and TESOL make TBLT implementation easier <input type="checkbox"/>	CELTA and TESOL improve teachers' practical knowledge of implementing TBLT, making it easier to apply in the classroom.
CELTA and TESOL increase motivation to use TBLT <input type="checkbox"/>	CELTA and TESOL courses increase teachers' motivation to use TBLT by improving their understanding and skill in task-based teaching.

Discussion

The interview data were qualitatively analyzed to extract the common themes from them. The results of the first research question, "What are the perceptions of internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers regarding TBLT principles?", highlighted the following themes as the key perceptions of these teachers about TBLT principles: 1. Ambiguity of teachers' role in TBLT; 2. Difficulty of TBLT implementation in low-proficiency groups; 3. Challenge of designing tasks for different aspects of English language; 4. Difficulty of learner evaluation with TBLT; 5. Teachers' unfamiliarity with TBLT; 6. TBLT makes learners more motivated; 7. TBLT makes learners more engaged and active; 8. TBLT increases learner communicative ability; 9. TBLT leads to more negotiations among learners; 10. TBLT reduces teacher

dependency on textbooks; 11. TBLT enhances learner meaning making; 12. TBLT makes learner goal-oriented; 13. TBLT makes classes more learner-centered; 14. TBLT makes language teaching more authentic; and 15. TBLT enhances learner autonomy.

Consistent with this study, Jasim (2011), enumerated the following perceptions about TBLT as perceived by English teachers: Lack of clarity in terms of teachers' role; inapplicability of TBLT for some English skills; difficulty of assessment with TBLT; teachers' low knowledge of TBLT; TBLT contribution to motivation; and TBLT emphasis on communication.

Also, in line with the present study, Xiongyong and Samuel (2011, 292–303) and Hadi (2013, 103–111) reported that English teachers perceive that TBLT has a positive effect on communication ability and motivation. Moreover, similar to the present study, Pohan, Andhin, Nopitasari, and Levana (2016, 256–265) referred to passive roles of textbooks in TBLT, the emphasis on meaningful learning, and goal-orientedness of tasks as perceptions of teachers about TBLT.

Another study whose results corroborate those of the present study is the study by Jones (2020) wherein it was concluded that the perceptions of teachers were that TBLT makes the role of learners more dominant, and TBLT encourages authentic use of language. Last but not least, in the same line with the present study, Liu, Mishan and Chambers (2018, 1–16) argued that teachers believed that by TBLT, learners become more autonomous.

In justifying the results, it can be argued that perceptions of the teachers are rooted in their knowledge based on TBLT. Mostly, the perceptions extracted from the interviews are in the same direction as the theoretical background of TBLT. For instance, as stated in the theoretical background of TBLT, TBLT seeks to develop communicative activities and improve learners' authentic language utilization (Jeon and Hahn 2006). In addition, as put by Richards

and Rodgers (2014), TBLT is an approach which calls for active engagement of learners to achieve a goal or complete a task. Moreover, the argument made for TBLT is that tasks are purposeful, and require learners' interaction. Tasks have a clear objective which shows that communication has been successful. To achieve the objective of tasks, learners should negotiate meaning and mention their own opinions (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011).

Furthermore, concerning the second research question 'Have CELTA and TESOL courses had any effect on internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles?', the following themes were extracted from interviews: 1. CELTA and TESOL increase knowledge of tasks; 2. CELTA and TESOL change attitudes towards TBLT; 3. CELTA and TESOL make TBLT implementation easier; and 4. CELTA and TESOL increase motivation to use TBLT.

Since the researchers found no study on the effect of CELTA and TESOL courses on teachers' perceptions of TBLT in the existing literature, this finding cannot be compared and contrasted with the previous studies. However, in justifying this finding, it can be argued that naturally any teacher education and training program has some effects on teachers' perceptions, and CELTA and TESOL courses are no exception in this regard. Thus, the effect of CELTA and TESOL courses on teachers' perceptions of TBLT is not far-fetched. Moreover, it can be argued that since practical aspects of TBLT are usually emphasized in teacher training courses, teachers' level of awareness of different tasks and how to apply them in English classes is increased.

In other words, the researchers believe that theories become more meaningful when they are turned into practice. In CELTA and TESOL courses, like any other teacher education programs, demonstrations are used wherein teachers can vividly see how different principles

can be implemented in real class situations. This contributes to teachers' empowerment and helps them operationalize what they have read in books. This can be one of the reasons for the heavy influence of CELTA and TESOL courses on teachers' perceptions of TBLT.

In sum, the bottom line is that Iranian teachers' perceptions of TBLT are positive. They have a positive perception towards TBLT; become motivated by it; think that TBLT outcomes are useful; and believe that CELTA and TESOL courses have significantly influenced their perceptions of TBLT.

Conclusion

The results of data analysis revealed the following themes as internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles: Ambiguity of teachers' role in TBLT; Difficulty of TBLT implementation in low-proficiency groups; Challenge of designing tasks for different aspects of English language; Difficulty of learner evaluation with TBLT; Teachers' unfamiliarity with TBLT; TBLT makes learners more motivated; TBLT makes learners more engaged and active; TBLT increases learner communicative ability; TBLT leads to more negotiations among learners; TBLT reduces teacher dependency to textbooks; TBLT enhances learner meaning making; TBLT makes learner goal-oriented; TBLT makes classes more learner-centered; TBLT makes language teaching more authentic; and TBLT enhances learner autonomy.

Moreover, regarding the effect of CELTA and TESOL courses on internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles, the participants perceived that CELTA and TESOL increase knowledge of tasks; CELTA and TESOL change attitude towards

TBLT; CELTA and TESOL make TBLT implementation easier; and CELTA and TESOL increase motivation to use TBLT.

The above results are enlightening and useful taking this issue into account that recently, TBLT has been more emphasized and touched from different angles with the focus on meaning, real-world language use, and communicative-oriented activities in an attempt to merge different language skills (Firouzi and Khabiri 2018, 43-55). With a view to the enhanced dominance of TBLT and teachers' perceptions of TBLT in the recent studies in the field, the stated findings are of high utility.

All in all, it can be concluded that internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT principles are more positive than negative. This shows that internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers have a positive regard about TBLT and welcome using TBLT in their classes. Given that the existing literature on TBLT supports the effectiveness of TBLT on learning different English skills, the positive perceptions of teachers can contribute to using TBLT in EFL classes. This in turn can result in significant improvements in EFL learners' English achievement.

Moreover, considering that internationally-certified Iranian EFL teachers were of the opinion that CELTA and TESOL courses had a significant effect on their perceptions of TBLT principles, it is concluded that (some) teacher training programs have the potential to exert effects on teacher trainees' perceptions of TBLT. Therefore, stakeholders can take the advantages of such programs in a way that teachers' perceptions positively. This can contribute great achievements for both teachers and learners in EFL settings.

In line with the findings of the study, the first implication of the study for English teachers is that they can use TBLT in their classes in trying to improve their students'

communication, motivation, engagement, autonomy, etc. Moreover, they can benefit from TBLT if they want to reduce the limitations imposed by textbooks on them. Although today, compared to the previous two decades, there are sufficient academic research on TBLT, TBLT has not been yet extensively implemented in Iran. To see more progress in this regard, teachers should be willing to take on the challenge and raise their awareness regarding principles of TBLT.

It might be no exaggeration to see curriculum planners/materials developers in the front line of evolution/revolution in language teaching principles and even practices. So, regarding the implication of the findings for curriculum planners/materials developers, it can be said that curriculum planners can take the findings of the present study into account and develop the educational materials in a way that the use of TBLT is encouraged in teaching English in the context of Iran. Another reason why materials developer can have a significant role in raising awareness about the principles and practices of TBLT is that still quite a few teachers in Iran (specifically those in Iran language institute) rely on coursebooks; so, materials developers have an important role in this regard.

Finally, implication of the findings for teacher education stakeholders is that they can employ international teacher training courses in an attempt to change the perceptions of teachers of TBLT in a positive manner so that teachers become more willing to resort to TBLT in teaching English.

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