Localising Task-Based Language Teaching in China's Examination-oriented Context: Exploring the Effectiveness of a Localised Task-Based Language Teaching Form on Oral Performance

by

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Statement of Originality

I, LU, Jinmiao, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

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Abstract

Recently, there has been an urgent need in foreign language teaching to develop culturally appropriate task designs and appropriate task-based instruction method around the world, including China. Due to the effectiveness of TBLT in improving English as a foreign language (EFL) students' communicative abilities and higher-order thinking skills, TBLT is highly recommended in the National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) of China. However, the current implementation status is far from satisfactory. Most EFL teachers in Asian regions, including China, tend to use traditional instruction method rather than TBLT in regular teaching (Carless, 2007). Accordingly, this project aims to investigate a localised TBLT form that is suitable for EFL education in China's examination-oriented culture.

To achieve the research purpose, a mixed-method design was adopted that involved a qualitative case study and a quantitative intervention study. First, eight EFL teachers from three different middle schools in China participated in the case study to ensure sufficient qualitative information was collected to inform the design of the intervention study. The qualitative case study involved interviews and classroom observations, aiming to collect information on teachers' perceptions, practice, and suggestions regarding how to localise TBLT in China. The grounded theory was employed for the qualitative data analysis, which was decoded by the author and another doctoral candidate in EFL education. The findings of the case study revealed that TBLT has the positive influence on motivating learners, engaging students, and alleviating the fear of making mistakes. However, there are two obstacles that can demotivate EFL

teachers from fully implementing classic TBLT in China: conflicts between traditional Chinese culture and classic TBLT and large class sizes. Furthermore, the informants' suggestions for localising TBLT in China were also explored. These included connecting topics in TBLT with language items for examination, reducing task-based interaction time in the classroom, and incorporating traditional presentation, practice, and production (PPP) method into localised TBLT design.

Informed by the findings of the case study and Willis' (1996) TBLT framework, a localised TBLT intervention study was piloted and implemented to assess its effectiveness on speaking performance considering complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). The intervention study involved 101 students in Grade Seven who were divided into two groups: an experimental group (N = 50, localised TBLT) and a control group (N = 51, traditional instruction method). The two intervention groups were taught by the same EFL teacher, and a series of independent samples t-tests were performed using CAF measures. The results indicated that the student participants achieved a large- to medium-sized improvement in overall oral performance. Specifically, the localised TBLT had a significant and large effect on fluency and complexity compared with the traditional approach. In addition, the experimental group exhibited a slight improvement in accuracy. Ultimately, a possible localised TBLT framework was proposed with localised task types and some focus-on-form elements included to suit China's examination-oriented culture.

Keywords: classic TBLT, localised TBLT, oral performance, examination-oriented context

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List of Abbreviations

TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
CAF	Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency
EAP	English for Academic Purpose
PPP	Presentation, Practice, Production
NECS	National English Curriculum Standards
CSL	Chinese as a Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
L2	Second Language
IELTS	The International English Language Testing System
SSARC	Simplify-Stabilise-Automatise-Restructure-Complexify
GPC	Guided Planning with Content
ESL	English as a Second Language
PET	Preliminary English Test
GPV	Guided Planning with Vocabulary
PEP	People's Education Press
TC	Task Complexity
SL	Second Life

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This project aims to create a localised task-based language teaching (TBLT) form for use in China and examine its effectiveness on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' oral performance in implementation. Chapter 1 presents the research background of TBLT implementation in China, followed by an elaboration of the research purposes and proposals for the research questions that are expected to be addressed. Subsequently, the significance of this study is illustrated.

1.1 Research Background

This section focuses on how the contextual background of this study was built from three perspectives: communicative TBLT pedagogy and its suitability for oral instruction, language policy in China considering TBLT, and the implementation situation of task-based instruction in China's examination-oriented context.

1.1.1 Communicative Task-Based Language Teaching Pedagogy and Its Suitability for Oral Instruction

Long M. H. (1985) was among the first to propose TBLT as a language pedagogy and regarded

a task as an activity that is communicative to some degree, aiming at practicing specific language forms. Long M. H. (1985) suggested that a task should be what happened in real life, such as at work or at play. Then, he recommended some pedagogical tasks (such as role-playing imaginary job interviews) to improve foreign language learners' production and comprehension of questions (M. H. Long, 2016). In comparison, Skehan (1998) identified a task as a meaning-focused activity related to the real world, highlighting task completion and learning outcomes. Ellis (2003) defined a task in a pedagogical way as a work plan which makes students produce language pragmatically for the purpose of reaching an outcome. From Nunan's (2005) perspective, a task is a piece of classroom work to help learners comprehend, manipulate, produce, or interact in the foreign language to express meaning, rather than focusing on form. According to Willis (1996), a task means a goal-oriented activity where the target language is used for the purpose of yielding a real-life result. That is to say, whatever target language resources students have could be used to achieve a real outcome (e.g., deal with a problem, play a game, exchange information) (Willis, 1996). Tasks could include drawing a family tree, conducting a family survey, or a memory challenge. In Willis's definition, an identifiable outcome and an aim to be reached are very important to note in a task. In addition, the meaning is stressed in Willis's (1996) definition, embodying the concept that learners aim to achieve a real outcome by using the foreign language in communication and interaction.

From these definitions, it can be concluded that there are some common features of TBLT mentioned by scholars in that it is meaning-focused. The aim is to enhance learners'

communicative skills when completing a task and to guide students toward achieving communicative goals through oral or written communication training. Halici Page and Mede (2018) also put forward that the primary goal of TBLT is to enhance learners' interactive ability by doing real-world tasks. Moreover, TBLT involves the holistic use of language performed in communication, rather than dividing the language into separate elements (M. Long, 2014). Therefore, it provides a bridge for second language learners between their first and target languages and encourages learners to communicate with partners in the target language.

The literature has presented effective learning outcomes from TBLT implementation in foreign language learning (Bao & Du, 2015). For example, Iwashita and Li (2012) discovered that task-based instruction encourages students to engage in classroom interactions by providing feedback to each other. Moreover, TBLT can enhance students' oral proficiency in terms of fluency, listening comprehension, and vocabulary learning (Chacón, 2012). In addition, TBLT has proved effective in improving learners' skills when transferring what is learned in the class to real life (Macías, 2004). Furthermore, scholars have discovered that TBLT contributes to positive study situations through increasing student interest (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007), building self-efficacy (Lopes, 2004), and inspiring study initiative (M. Park, 2012).

Specifically, TBLT has a positive influence on oral performance, with a medium to large effect size. González-Lloret and Nielson's (2015) results demonstrated that the recently developed course, which applied Long M. H.'s (1985) TBLT theory, helped learners conduct critical job

tasks in the target language efficiently. Moreover, it enhanced students' Spanish oral proficiency considering fluency and syntactic complexity, with a large effect size. Hasan (2014) also reported that a task-based program based on Willis's (1996) TBLT framework was effective in both one- and two-way dialogue with a large effect size. The research by Lan et al. (2016) revealed that all the participants conducting reasoning- and information-gap tasks improved significantly in oral performance, with a large effect size. Similar results were reported in Mulyadi et al.'s (2021) study, where a technology-enhanced TBLT course was helpful for listening comprehension skills (medium effect size) and oral production (large effect size). Park M. S. (2021) demonstrated a general effect of planning in task-based instruction on the participants' fluency and complexity in oral performance. It was also revealed that solitary planning in task-based instruction was effective in improving fluency, with a large effect size. In solitary planning, students tend to plan in isolation (Foster & Skehan, 1999). In addition, group-based planning contributes to the highest complexity marks, with a medium effect size. Teacher-led planning produces more accurate oral performance with richer vocabulary and a medium effect size. Chen J. C. C. (2020) found that participants exhibited statistically significant increases in grammatical complexity (with a large effect size in syntactic complexity and syntactic variety) and linguistic accuracy (with a large effect size in each measured variable). The results of Khoram's (2019) study revealed that both pre-task planning situations and task type had a positive influence on improving the accuracy of oral production, with a large effect size. BavaHarji et al. (2014) revealed that scaffolding students to complete tasks with increasing complexity levels enhanced their second-language speaking performance

in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Therefore, the literature demonstrates that learners can benefit extensively from TBLT, specifically in oral performance.

Drawing conclusions from the definitions and targets of TBLT, there are some common features of TBLT mentioned by the scholars: (1) it is meaning-focused, (2) it aims to help students improve their communicative language skills when completing a series of tasks, and (3) it guides students to achieve communicative goals through oral or written communication training. Therefore, TBLT is suitable for oral introduction. Recent studies have also supported the view that TBLT effectively impacts learning outcomes, specifically on oral production. According to McDonough (2015), localised TBLT means a pedagogy developed and adapted from TBLT in a specific teaching context. Enlightened by McDonough's (2015) definition of localized TBLT, we define localised TBLT as an EFL pedagogy adapted from TBLT with certain features of traditional instruction method incorporated considering the specific examination-oriented context in China. Thus, this study focuses on the effectiveness of a localized TBLT form on oral performance in China.

1.1.2 Language Policy in China with Respect to Task-Based Language Teaching

Influenced by the longstanding Confucian culture, Chinese EFL teachers still prefer the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) method, which emphasises language forms and grammatical rules (Tong, 2005). Moreover, EFL teaching in China remains teacher-

centered, didactic, and non-interactive, resulting in Chinese EFL learners not being able to communicate or do things in English, even after extensively studying English at school (Hu, 2013). Influenced by the high pressure caused by examinations, many students are forced to concentrate on the accuracy of language forms instead of their ability to use language. According to the information obtained from the interviewees in my case study (Teachers 5 and 8), although EFL learners in China can read or write in English, many are unable to communicate with others in English and learn what is commonly known as “dumb English”.

Thus, it is pressing to improve EFL learners’ language use abilities to meet the requirements of modern society in China (Hu, 2013). The Requirements for College English Course in China (2007) clearly emphasizes that it is important to develop Chinese students’ communicative ability in using English, especially in terms of listening and speaking ability. Moreover, the purpose of learning English is to help students communicate effectively in English in future study and work. The document also points out that EFL learners’ ability of learning independently should be enhanced in order to meet the needs of sustained economic and social development in China and around the world.

Considering the presented benefits of task-based instruction for enhancing students’ language proficiency and communicative skills, TBLT was introduced into China to help EFL learners meet the requirements of its changing society (MOE, 2001; 2011). The National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in July 2001

distinctly claimed that 'Instructors should refrain from traditional EFL approaches emphasizing knowledge transmission and try to use task-based instruction methods' (MOE, 2001, p. 29). In addition, the English Syllabus for Full-time Junior Secondary Schools of Nine-Year Compulsory Education (MOE, 2022) explicitly proposes that students should acquire the ability to use English at a preliminary stage to lay a solid foundation for daily communication. The documents determined the importance of communication skills in the target language and recommended the use of a communicative teaching method (e.g., TBLT) in EFL education in China. Since then, the EFL education concept has undergone changes in China, with scholars and EFL instructors gradually realising that it is more significant to actually use English rather than simply reciting grammar rules. In 2011, the NECS was revised by repurposing the English curriculum to enhance learners' language-use abilities and their higher-order thinking skills (MOE, 2011). As a type of communicative methodology, TBLT that emphasises language use is strongly recommended for Chinese middle schools, as stated in the NECS (MOE, 2011):

Learners can use English in real life, aiming at enhancing learners' comprehensive language use skills. The starting point of learning language forms should be language use, embodied in that students can develop the ability of 'do things in English'. Furthermore, teachers should create English learning situations close to real life, apply progressive learning activities and adopt teaching methods emphasizing both the learning processes and learning outcomes, such as TBLT (p. 20).

From these official documents (e.g., NECS in 2001 and 2011), we can see that the

implementation of TBLT is recommended in China. This means that secondary schools and teachers are encouraged to apply TBLT aiming at improving learners' language use ability and cultivating high-level English learners, as recommended by the NECS.

1.1.3 The Implementation Situation of Task-Based Language Teaching in China

As highlighted by Hu (2013), in addition to reciting vocabulary and grammar, the Chinese society requires English learners to interact and communicate smoothly and effectively with others. This means that, except for vocabulary and grammatical rules, more emphasis should be placed on communication and interaction in the target language.

China has a long history of being an examination culture. Examination is dominant in allocating scarce educational resources, promoting class mobility, and determining personal development in China. For English tests in China, exam content is usually centred on the accuracy of language forms (e.g., words, grammar, and sentence structure), while the assessment of language-use ability occupies a very small proportion. This examination-oriented culture motivates instructors and learners to concentrate on test items in examination papers, neglecting any subject matter that will not be tested. As one teacher mentioned in the interview in my case study, many teachers do not care about whether students' language use ability is improved, as they only focus on the final examination scores. Most parents and students hold the same attitude toward EFL learning. It is important to point out that oral tests

are absent from English examinations in most schools of China. In other words, EFL learners' oral performance is not evaluated at the stage of compulsory education (including primary, junior, and senior school), resulting in students' communicative abilities and language use skills in the target language being overlooked. Therefore, directed by examination content, teaching methods remain teacher-centred with top-down transmission in most situations in China (Carless, 2007).

In contrast, TBLT is a meaning-focused method that emphasises communication and interpersonal interactions in the target language (Nunan, 2005; Willis, 1996). Here, students initially need to work with the foreign language and process it for meaning, and then concentrate on language forms that carry the meanings (Willis, 1996). In this sense, meaning-focused TBLT contradicts the form-focused test content prevalent in China. Therefore, although TBLT is recommended by the NECS (MOE, 2001, 2011), it is not fully implemented in Mainland China (Carless, 2003). Accordingly, to address this conflict between an examination-oriented culture and TBLT, finding a localised TBLT model suitable for China has become a major challenge in theory and practice.

However, the 'Double Reduction' policy promoted in 2021 provided a chance for TBLT implementation in Chinese schools. The Double Reduction policy means reducing students' workload and children's extracurricular education training (especially for subject training, such as English), which was forwarded by the General Office of the State Council in China (2021).

Reducing student workload after school intrinsically sets higher demands for the quality of homework (Yuan, 2022). Moreover, the excessive drilling exercises in traditional teaching methods cannot meet the requirements of the Double Reduction policy. Homework should benefit students in improving their language use skills and higher-order thinking skills instead of just focusing on the accuracy of language forms. Similarly, Yuan (2022) determined that after-school homework (such as drawing a mind map or sharing information with classmates) should motivate students to use English in real life. The activities mentioned by Yuan (2022) are included in task-based instruction. If a TBLT method was adopted, students could fully utilise after-school time to prepare for the task, communicate with others, and exchange ideas about a topic for their task performance in class. Therefore, the Double Reduction policy can promote TBLT implementation in Chinese schools from the perspective of assigning high-level homework.

In addition, almost all extracurricular education training institutions for children have been shut down, which is a decision that is influenced by the Double Reduction policy. Before this, many students (including primary, junior middle, and senior middle students) chose to study in these extracurricular training institutions to practise their English oral skills and improve their language use abilities after school. Currently, in addition to private one-to-one counselling, training institutions are prohibited from providing remedial services to students at the compulsory education stage. In other words, most EFL learners in China now have no means of improving their oral performance after school. Accordingly, English learning in school

should not just focus on the accuracy of language forms. Students have a high requirement for EFL learning in classrooms to improve their language use skills. Fortunately, task-based instruction method is a good solution to this problem. Overall, it can be stated that the Double Reduction policy provides a chance for TBLT to be implemented in China today.

A similar situation regarding TBLT implementation also exists in other Asian regions, including Hong Kong (Carless, 2007), Japan (Harris, 2018), and Korea (Kim et al., 2017). As illustrated previously, TBLT benefits oral production in L2 learning (e.g., Chacón, 2012, González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Hasan, 2014). Therefore, the designed localised TBLT form in this study contributes to EFL education in China and localisation studies of TBLT in different situations.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of task-based instruction is to enhance students' communicative abilities in the target language (Ellis, 2003, p. 4). Further, Ellis (2003) suggested that tasks could enhance learners' language competency in speaking through language use. The main feature of TBLT is that learners use language to complete interactive tasks (Carless, 2009). A further advantage of task-based instruction is involving learners in active learning through communication (Carless, 2009). In addition, oral communication is emphasised in the TBLT approach (Nunan,

2005), and 'learning to do things in English' within contexts that approximate real life is noted in the NECS (MOE, 2011). Therefore, the dependent variable in this study focuses on oral performance.

When the Anglo–American TBLT is introduced into China's Confucian context, some conflicts appear between the traditional approach (instructor-dominant, knowledge-transmitting, and grammar-based) and TBLT (Carless, 2007). Accordingly, the question of how form-focused work is conducted becomes a major issue in task-based instruction, especially in examination-oriented contexts, where form is regarded as critical teaching content (Carless, 2009). Despite being the official syllabus in Mainland China, task-based instruction does not appear to be fully used in daily teaching, which constitutes the starting point of this project. To fill the gap between TBLT and China's examination culture, this research project has the following aims:

(1) Determine Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions (involving advantages and obstacles included in TBLT implementation) and practice of task-based instruction, as well as suggestions related to localising TBLT in China through a case study.
(2) Examine whether a localised form design based on the findings of the case study benefits students' oral performance considering CAF through an intervention study.
(3) Present a possible localised TBLT framework that would be suitable for China's examination-oriented context.

1.3 Research Questions

As illustrated previously, the NECS (MOE, 2001; 2011) of China encourages EFL teachers to apply TBLT in real classrooms to promote learners' language-use skills. However, meaning-focused TBLT emphasises communication and interaction, which presents some challenges in China's examination-oriented educational culture. Thus, to achieve the research aims and create a localised TBLT framework that is suitable for China, this doctoral thesis attempts to answer the following key research questions:

Q1 What are the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to localising TBLT in China?

Q2 Will a localised TBLT in China be more effective than traditional pedagogy on EFL learners' oral performance considering CAF?

Q3 What would constitute a possible localised framework of TBLT in China?

First, Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of TBLT in daily life are explored in terms of the advantages and obstacles of TBLT encountered in EFL classrooms, as well as to what extent the teachers would apply TBLT principles in daily teaching. The relevant data will be collected through interviews with the teacher participants and from classroom observations to gain a better understanding of TBLT implementation in China's examination-oriented context. In addition, the informants' suggestions on localising TBLT in China will be obtained, with the aim of discovering the localisation principles of TBLT under Confucian culture. A

case study, including interviews and classroom observations, will also be conducted to answer the first research question.

Second, the findings from answering the first research question will serve as a basis for the next study, which will answer the second research question. Chinese EFL teachers' practice and suggestions for TBLT localisation in China will contribute to a localised TBLT instruction design. To answer the second research question, an intervention study with an experimental group (localised TBLT) and a control group (traditional approach) will be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the localised TBLT form on oral performance in China's examination-oriented context.

Third, after examining the effectiveness of the localised TBLT on students' oral performance (with respect to complexity, accuracy, and fluency), a possible localised TBLT framework suitable for China's examination-oriented context will be described in detail.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Some scholars (e.g., Bruton, 2005; Butler, 2011; Carless, 2003; Ellis, 2016) have noted many challenges when conducting TBLT in Asian schools, which are influenced by specific educational histories and examination systems. The same situation is happening in China.

Therefore, the type of TBLT implementation recommended by the NECS (MOE, 2011) is not satisfactory in China's EFL education system. Moreover, Butler (2011) highlighted the pressing need for flexible adaptations of task-based instruction methods in authentic contexts. However, the literature indicates no exploration of an effective localised TBLT framework with sufficient evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness on any specific learning outcome. Accordingly, a study with the intention of investigating a localised TBLT framework in China and exploring its effectiveness on oral performance can fill these research gaps.

First, the creation of a localised task-based instruction framework could prove the possibility that TBLT can be adapted and modified to the examination-oriented culture in China. On examination, it was considered effective for improving students' oral performance, specifically in terms of fluency and complexity. This study provided concrete measurements of learning outcomes and indications of effect size to demonstrate the effectiveness of a localised TBLT form. This was accomplished by incorporating some localisation methods, such as adding focus-on-form elements, applying focused tasks, and targeting tasks at examinations. Therefore, this study would diversify TBLT research findings into localisation studies and fill the gap between real implementation and theory.

Second, this project will positively influence second-language teaching in China. In the intervention study, the effectiveness of localised TBLT and traditional instruction on speaking performance (accuracy, fluency, and complexity) was examined to collect data for analysing

what type of approach is more suitable for middle school learners in China to meet the requirements of the NECS. A bottom-up study was employed to explore localised TBLT under a specific context. Thus, this study meets the current trend in foreign language teaching by developing suitable task designs and an adaptive TBLT and experimenting with effective implementation forms under the Chinese socio-cultural context. Especially under the situation of reducing students' homework load and reducing extracurricular training institutions (General Office of the State Council, 2021) in China today, TBLT benefits by assigning high-quality homework and enhancing students' language use ability in schools (when after-school training institutions are shut down).

Third, EFL teachers in China will benefit from a localised TBLT model. Over the past 20 years, the NECS has encouraged secondary school teachers to implement TBLT in real classrooms. However, the document fails to provide a detailed teaching process reference model for EFL instructors, resulting in most teachers being unclear about the implementation phases and perceiving it as being difficult to implement. Therefore, this study can exert a positive influence on addressing the implementation challenges associated with task-based instruction in China.

Fourth, during the intervention study, a revised evaluation scheme was developed to assess student participants' oral performance, with three elements involved: (1) a measurement framework of CAF adapted from Bui and Skehan's (2018) and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measures; (2) a revised band descriptors of oral performance by referring to IELTS band

descriptors or oral tests based on the dimensions of fluency, accuracy, and complexity; (3) a marking table to grade students' oral production in each measure. The evaluation scheme unique in this study will shed light on other studies considering CAF.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Four stages are included in the research process: (1) a case study, (2) piloting the localised TBLT instruction designs and the traditional PPP instruction designs, (3) an intervention study, (4) overall interpretation of research findings. There are totally eight chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 contains a brief introduction to the project. This includes the background (such as communicative TBLT pedagogy and its suitability for oral instruction, language policy in China considering TBLT, and the implementation situation of TBLT in China), the research purpose, the research questions, the significance of the project, and the thesis structure. Within the examination-oriented education context, an attempt is made in this project to determine a localised TBLT framework for simultaneously improving EFL learners' communicative ability and accurate use of language forms. To achieve this objective, we set the following three research questions: (1) What are the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to localising TBLT in China; (2) Will a localised TBLT in China be more effective than traditional pedagogy on EFL learners' oral performance considering CAF; (3) What would constitute a possible localised framework of TBLT in China. In addition, the significance of the research on task-based instruction (both

theoretically and practically) is illustrated in this chapter. The thesis structure is also presented in Chapter 1 to clarify the purpose and rationale of the research.

Chapter 2 reviews traditional instruction method, classic TBLT and localised TBLT around the world. We review traditional instruction approach and classic TBLT from two perspectives: theoretical and empirical (meaning its effectiveness on learning outcomes and teacher/student perceptions of TBLT). Then, localised TBLT is reviewed by considering what this concept means, the need for localisation, and the content of empirical studies on localised TBLT in Asian areas.

In Chapter 3, the general methodology is explained. First, a justification is presented for the exploratory mixed-method design, with a qualitative case study and a quantitative intervention study included. Second, the current research design is explained in general terms. Third, the instruction materials and examples of instruction designs for the intervention study are presented. Fourth, the measurement framework of oral performance used in this study is proposed. Finally, ethical considerations are included in this section.

Chapter 4 focuses on the case study, which explores Chinese EFL teachers' understanding and practice related to implementing TBLT as well as their suggestions about localising TBLT in the examination-oriented culture of China. The findings in this chapter inform the localised TBLT instruction design used for the subsequent intervention study. This chapter includes five

sections: a description of the sites and participants for the case study; data collection instruments (including interviews and classroom observations); data collection procedures of the case study; data analysis method (grounded theory); and a report of the case study results.

Chapter 5 presents the results of piloting a localised TBLT instruction design and a traditional presentation, practice, and production (PPP) teaching method design to justify the intervention material for the formal study. The TBLT design for the pilot study was created based on the principles mentioned by the participants in the case study.

Chapter 6 centres on the intervention study, which examines the efficiency of the localised TBLT principles derived from the case study on oral performance, considering accuracy, fluency, and complexity. This chapter includes six sections: (1) the participants in the intervention study; (2) instruments, including a test evaluation scheme, oral proficiency pre- and post- tests, and localised TBLT and traditional instruction design materials for the intervention; (3) data collection procedures with pre- and post-tests; (4) data analysis by employing descriptive statistics and significance tests; (5) report of the intervention study results; and (6) summary of the intervention study.

Chapter 7 discusses the key findings of the case study and the intervention study. Chinese EFL teachers' understanding, practice, and suggestions related to TBLT are initially discussed. Subsequently, an explanation of the operational mechanism behind the findings in the

intervention study is presented. Finally, the localised and weak TBLT framework in China is described through a comparison with Willis's classic TBLT and other localised TBLT forms reported in the literature.

Chapter 8 files the conclusions of the study and provides implications of the research findings for EFL teachers, students, and language policy makers. The limitations of the current study are also presented to provide suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A review of the traditional approach, TBLT and localised TBLT literature would contribute to a solid theoretical foundation for a localised TBLT framework design in China. Empirical studies that consider the three approaches are also reviewed in this chapter to determine the research gap.

2.1 Review of Traditional Instruction Methods

EFL teachers in Asian regions have a preference for the traditional PPP method (Ur, 2018). Even when instructors adopt task-based instruction, the teaching demonstrates traditional instruction features, such as teacher-centred classroom and didactic and non-interactive teaching (Carless, 2007; Mok, 2001). Therefore, the theories of traditional instruction method and related empirical researches should be reviewed to provide insights into the localisation study of TBLT in China. In the EFL teaching area, presentation-practice-production (PPP) is currently the most commonly used traditional teaching method in China and other countries (Carless, 2007). This part of this section focuses on reviewing PPP in terms of theory and implementation.

2.1.1 Phases of Traditional Instruction Method

Traditional instruction approaches regard linguistic items as the essence of foreign language education, which is achieved through repeating and conducting controlled activities (Richards, 2005). In other words, traditional instruction prefers accuracy to fluency with the aim of enhancing students' acquisition of linguistic elements through applying repetitive drills rather than improving communicative competence.

The methodology of PPP is commonly employed in EFL teaching and traditional instruction methods (Carless, 2006). This is defined as an approach to teaching language items that follows a sequence of learning a language item, practicing the item, and then producing (or using) the item (Tomlinson, 2011).

In the presentation stage, new linguistic elements are presented using either a conversation or text (Merve & Enisa, 2018). The teaching materials can be presented either deductively or inductively (Criado, 2013). Criado (2013) summarised that in deductive mode, the instructor initially demonstrates linguistic items and grammatical structures to the students, followed by providing explanations behind the meanings of vocabulary or the construction of structures. With inductive teaching materials, the learners are initially offered some sample grammatical structures or new words under certain contexts. Then, they are asked to conclude the structural rules or meaning of words.

In the practice stage, students are encouraged to practice taught vocabulary or grammar through controlled activities. For example, under the guidance of teachers or listening materials, students repeat sentences or dialogue until they can read the text aloud correctly. In addition, other teaching activities are carried out, including sentence or dialogue matching, filling in the blanks, and answering questions in the target language (Wen, 2017). 'Drills' originated from the Audiolingual Method and are the most commonly used activities in practice phases. During this stage, students are required to use the new language items presented in the first step as much as possible and fully understand their connotations and meanings. The aim here is to improve the accuracy of language use.

In the third stage, students produce linguistic elements in different contexts after practicing. The students are encouraged to use the target language to express their opinions more freely and to try and combine the newly learned knowledge with previous language items in a creative way (Tomlinson, 2011). For example, students are arranged to complete language output through classroom activities (such as role playing and situational imitation) with the aim of correctly mastering the target language. Whereas the second phase focuses on accuracy, the third production stage emphasises fluency (Criado, 2013).

2.1.2 Implementation of the Presentation-Practice-Production Approach

The PPP teaching method is a traditional pedagogy that emphasises language forms. Hence, it

is particularly effective in the examination-oriented educational culture of Asian countries (Littlewood, 2007). Although PPP has attracted various criticisms with respect to its inefficiency in improving students' language use skills in real contexts (M. H. Long, 1985), some Asian countries (including Indonesia, Vietnam, and China) continue to use PPP as the mainstream in foreign language education (Astuti, 2020; Pham & Do, 2020; Zhang, 2018).

Astuti (2020) conducted a study to apply the PPP approach in a junior high school in Indonesia and revealed that the method benefited EFL learners by increasing learning interest and improving learning engagement, specifically in junior high schools. The results indicated that PPP in Indonesia could make English learners more active and eager to participate in classroom activities. Moreover, the EFL students could adapt easily to the flow of PPP methods in English learning processes. In Vietnam, Pham and Do (2020) conducted a study to compare the different impacts of TBLT and PPP on students' productivity skills. The results revealed that there was no statistical difference between the two teaching methods in improving students' grammatical performance in terms of speaking and writing skills. In Hong Kong, EFL teachers still prefer to use traditional PPP methods for emphasising grammar instruction (Carless, 2009), although TBLT has been promoted in Hong Kong by the curriculum guidelines for many years (CDC, 2007). In China, Zhang (2018) conducted a study to compare the effectiveness of TBLT and PPP on speaking ability for higher vocational college students. The results indicated that different teaching methods had different effects on students with different levels of English proficiency. Moreover, EFL learners with lower English proficiency levels benefited more from

the PPP approach compared to the TBLT method. In contrast, for students with higher levels of English proficiency, TBLT proved to be more efficient than PPP methods.

In summary, the implementation of PPP in Asian countries has demonstrated that PPP has its own utilisation values under specific educational backgrounds, particularly in examination-oriented contexts. However, as indicated by Wong and Van Patten (2003), the implementation of PPP depends heavily on the application of decontextualised and meaningless drills. Here, a series of structural patterns in the form of isolated language items are presented to the students as samples, after which the students are required to produce them accurately by practice and repetition (Maftoon & Sarem, 2015). Skehan (1996b) posited that the sequence of PPP cannot fully reflect the principle of second language acquisition, given that communicative skills and language-use ability for L2 acquisition are neglected in PPP approaches. Therefore, traditional methods, such as PPP, are gradually being replaced by communicative teaching methods, such as TBLT (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

2.2 Review of Task-Based Language Teaching

This part contains reviews of studies on TBLT, including theoretical bases and empirical studies. Such information is helpful for analysing teachers' perceptions and practices related to TBLT in China and provides implications for the localised TBLT design within an examination-

oriented context.

2.2.1 Theoretical Basis of Task-Based Language Teaching

2.2.1.1 Definitions of Task

In TBLT, tasks (instead of language items) are treated as the unit and essence of teaching in foreign language learning classrooms (M. H. Long, 1985). Long M. H. (1981) defines tasks as what people do in real life. This type of tasks could involve 'painting a fence, filling out a form, dressing a child, making and airline reservation, finding a street destination, etc'. The holistic use of language (rather than dividing it into separate elements) is regarded as the core of TBLT (M. H. Long, 1985). Long M. H. (2016) also posits that the aim of TBLT is to prepare students for communicating in the target language after class.

According to Nunan (1993), a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that includes students understanding, handling, performing, or communicating in the target language. Importantly, the students' focus was on meaning instead of language forms. For example, acting out a drama and working out a map when listening to a drumbeat are regarded as pedagogical tasks (Nunan, 2004). Different from the task in Long M. H.'s (1985) view, Nunan restricted tasks in the classroom and treats them as an instruction process, in which learners could comprehend and communicate in order to achieve an outcome.

From Willis's (1996) perspective, a task means a goal-oriented activity in which the target language is used for the purpose of yielding a real-life result. In other words, whatever target language resources students have could be used to achieve a real outcome (e.g., dealing with a problem, playing a game, or exchanging information) (Willis, 1996). Tasks could include drawing a family tree, conducting a family survey, or a memory challenge. In Willis' definition, an identifiable outcome and an aim to be reached are very important to note in a task. In addition, the meaning is stressed in Willis's (1996) definition, embodying the concept that learners aim to achieve a real outcome by using the foreign language in communication and interaction.

2.2.1.2 Willis's Task-Based Language Teaching Framework

Willis (1996) presented a flexible TBLT form that incorporated three phases: pre-task, task cycle, and focus-on-form. During the pre-task, learners should clarify the objective to be achieved and what kind of outcome should be produced. This initial phase also provides useful exposure that helps learners evoke relevant vocabulary or structures and learn new forms inductively. The second stage (task cycle) includes doing the task, planning to report, and reporting the task. Meaning is focused in task cycle. Regarding the third stage (focus on form), language features appeared in the task performance are the specifically focused. In order to understand these three classic TBLT stages clearly, a summary is provided in Table 1.

A flexible feature of Willis's (1996) TBLT is that the framework does not necessarily equate to

a ‘lesson’. For instance, the pre-task step can be finished in the previous class, meaning that students can do some preparation work after class. Similarly, rehearsing the report at the planning stage could be completed as homework. Willis (1996) also posits that by considering the different needs and backgrounds of learners, the components of the TBLT framework could be weighted in a different way, which would mainly be embodied in implementation time during class. In addition, the flexibility of the framework is reflected in the grouping method. This means that students with various language proficiencies can work together to perform tasks easily (Willis, 1996). Since Willis’s (1996) TBLT framework is flexible and is widely employed by L2 instructors (Han, 2014), this study focuses on the implementation phases of Willis’s (1996) theory.

Table 1. Willis’s TBLT Framework

Pre-task	Introduction to the topic and task		
During-task (Task cycle)	Task	Planning	Report
	Students do the task on their own, in pairs, or in groups. The teacher plays a role of a monitor.	Students plan to report the task in front of class.	Students report the task. Peer-feedback and comments are provided.
Post-task (Focus-on-Form)	Students find out the specific features of language rules.	Students practice new language forms, such as words and structures.	

(Adapted from Halici Page & Mede, 2018; Willis, 1996)

Based on a theoretical review of task-based instruction, some features of TBLT can be

confirmed. First, teachers use tasks rather than language forms as units of teaching in the classroom. These tasks should either approximate what happens in real life (M. H. Long, 1985) or be pedagogical tasks with the actual use of language for a real purpose (Nunan, 2006; Willis, 1996). Second, meaning exchange is vital in TBLT. Hence, scholars have highlighted a focus on meaning communication and interaction as important (M. H. Long, 1985; Nunan, 2006; Willis, 1996) in the field of task-based instruction. The purpose of TBLT is to enhance learners' interactive abilities through doing tasks (Halici Page & Mede, 2018). Third, the teaching process of TBLT is student-centred from beginning to end. Even in Willis' *Language Focus* stage, the students are guided by the teacher to find out language rules by themselves inductively. Hence, teachers act as monitors or directors to create activities for promoting learning by doing and motivating students in class.

Any implementation of TBLT that encompasses the three previously mentioned features is considered classic TBLT. When some adaptations are made during task-based instruction (to fit in with the needs of a specific context), it then becomes a localised TBLT implementation. As mentioned previously, Willis's classic TBLT framework is highly operable in the classroom with some flexibility in terms of implementation time for each component of the framework and the way students are grouped. For these reasons, it will be adopted in the current study as the theoretical basis of the localised TBLT model in China.

2.2.2 Empirical Studies of Classic Task-Based Language Teaching

In this section, literature-themed empirical studies of classic TBLT are reviewed, including its effectiveness on EFL learning outcome and teachers' (and students') perceptions.

2.2.2.1 Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching on Learning Outcomes and Oral Performance

The literature has showed effective learning outcomes when applying TBLT in foreign language learning. For instance, Leaver and Kaplan (2004) revealed that TBLT can result in lower drop-out rates and better language ability compared to courses that do not apply TBLT in foreign language teaching. Moreover, Iwashita and Li (2012) determined that TBLT offered a good chance for students to take part in classroom interactions by commenting on each other. In addition, TBLT can help to shape and enhance students' oral performance, including fluency, listening comprehension, and vocabulary learning (Chacón, 2012); increase students' use of the foreign language (Tinker Sachs, 2009), and improve students' skills in transferring what was learned in class to the outside world (Macías, 2004). Milarisa (2019) revealed that TBLT can be an effective method for improving writing ability.

Lu and Fan (2021) conducted a study to investigate the influence of focus-on-form TBLT on Taiwanese Children's English vocabulary acquisition and retention. They found no statistical difference between the experimental group (TBLT) and the control group (PPP) in terms of

vocabulary tests. In comparison, learners who received task-based instruction achieved improved performance in interpersonal interactions and task participation. In addition, the results indicated that in-class interactions and output during TBLT in an experimental group were helpful for the comprehension and learning of second language vocabulary. The same result was also found in NamazianDost et al.'s (2017) study, in which the experimental group (TBLT) performed much better than the control group (traditional instruction) in developing grammar ability. Moreover, the motivation of the students in the experimental group also increased significantly.

Scholars have also revealed that task-based instruction can contribute to a positive study situation by increasing student interest (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007), building student confidence (Lopes, 2004), and enhancing learning motivation (M. Park, 2012). Bao and Du (2015) also discovered that the implementation of TBLT is effective at increasing lower-level students' participation after school and arousing their interest in foreign language learning. Collectively, the studies indicate that students can gain substantive benefits from task-based instruction in various aspects.

Long M. H. (2016) indicated that TBLT encourages students to practice foreign languages through interactions after class. Furthermore, Nunan (2006) suggested that pedagogical tasks emphasise communication, language use, and meaning rather than grammatical or vocabulary form. In addition, meaning is stressed in Willis's (1996) definition, which embodies the concept

that learners are using language to exchange meanings for a real purpose. Thus, this study mainly focuses on whether the communicative task-based approach is effective for oral performance in actual practice.

Many empirical studies have not provided details of effect sizes. To demonstrate the effectiveness of TBLT clearly, the author calculated effect sizes based on the data reported in these studies (e.g., Mean and SD) and checked with a statistician that the appropriate procedure had been followed. All the effect sizes calculated by the author are marked with a star sign (*). The review of the effectiveness of TBLT on oral performance is clearly described in Table 2.

Table 2. Critical Review of the Effectiveness of TBLT on Oral Performance

Scholars	**Theoretical basis**	**Independent variable**	**Dependent variables & Effect size**
González-Lloret and Nielson (2015)	Long M. H.'s (1985) TBLT	Task-based Spanish course	A large effect size in overall Spanish proficiency in terms of fluency (Cohen's d = 1.536*) and syntactic complexity (Cohen's d = 1.251*)
	González-Lloret, M., & Nielson, K. B. (2015). Evaluating TBLT: The case of a task-based Spanish program. *Language Teaching Research*, *19*(5), 525-549.		
Hasan (2014)	Willis's (1996) TBLT framework	Task-based program	A large effect size in one-way monologue (Cohen's d = 2.564*) and two-way dialogue (Cohen's *d* = 1.683*)
	Hasan, A. A. A. (2014). The effect of using task-based learning in teaching English on the oral performance of the secondary school students. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, *1*(1045), 1-15.		
Lan et al. (2016)	Prabhu's classification of task types	Information tasks, reasoning tasks, and opinion-gap tasks	A large effect size in terms of the reasoning-gap task (Cohen's *d* = 2.189*) and the information-gap task (Cohen's *d* = 1.299*) on oral performance
	Lan, Y. J., Kan, Y. H., Sung, Y. T., & Chung, K. E. (2016). Oral-performance language tasks for CSL beginners in Second Life. *Language Learning & Technology*, *20*(3), 60–79. Retrieved		

	from http://llt.msu.edu/issues/october2016/lanetal.pdf		
Mulyadi et al. (2021)	Nielson et al.' and Willis' TBLT stages	A technology-enhanced TBLT course	A medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.632*) on listening comprehension skills; a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.482*) on oral production
	Mulyadi, D., Wijayatiningsih, T. D., Singh, C. K. S., & Prastikawati, E. F. (2021). Effects of technology enhanced task-based language teaching on learners' listening comprehension and speaking performance. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(3), 717-736. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14342a		
Kim (2020)	SSARC model	Task sequence	Complexity: TC is better than GPV, GPC; Fluency: GPV is better than GPC (effect size is not available)
	Kim, N. (2020). The effects of different task sequences on novice L2 learners' oral performance in the classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 1-26.		
Park M. S. (2021)	Levelt's speech production model	Pre-task planning (teacher-led, group-based, and solitary)	A large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.113*) in solitary planning on improving fluency; A medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.603*) in group-based planning on improving complexity; A medium effect size (0.526*) in teacher-led planning on accuracy
	Park, M. S. (2021). Effects of different sources of pre-task planning on second language oral performance: A study of Korean EFL learners. *TESL-EJ*, 25(2), 1-16.		
Chen J. C. C. (2020)	Doughty and Long's (2003) methodological principles of TBLT	Task planning	A large effect size in grammatical complexity (syntactic complexity and syntactic variety); A large effect size in linguistic accuracy
	Chen, J.C.C. (2020). The effects of pre-task planning on EFL learners' oral performance in a 3D multi-user virtual environment. *ReCALL*, *32*(3), 232–249.		
Khoram (2019)	Ellis's (2003) theory of pre-task planning and Skehan's (2001) theory of task types	Task type and pre-task planning	A large effect size in improving the accuracy of oral production
	Khoram, A. (2019). The impact of task type and pre-task planning condition on the accuracy of intermediate EFL learners' oral performance, *Cogent Education*, 6(1),1-13.		

BavaHarji et al. (2014)	Robinson's triadic componential framework and Nunan's ranks of task difficulty	Tasks with varying complexity levels (simple, complex+, and complex++)	Tasks with increasing complexity levels enhanced the second language speaking performance considering accuracy, fluency, and complexity (no effect size was provided)
	BavaHarji, M., Gheitanchian, M., & Letchumanan, K. (2014). The effect of multimedia Task-Based Language Teaching on EFL learners' oral L2 production. *English Language Teaching, 7*(4), 11-24.		

González-Lloret and Nielson (2015) conducted a study to evaluate a task-based Spanish course in the United States. A strong version of TBLT based on Long M. H.'s (1985) view that relies on real-world tasks and needs analysis was adopted in their study. The results indicated that their recently developed TBLT course helped learners to conduct critical job tasks in the second language efficiently, while simultaneously enhancing learners' overall Spanish proficiency considering fluency (Cohen's d = 1.536*) and syntactic complexity (Cohen's d = 1.251*) with large effect sizes. The same result was achieved in Hasan's (2014) study based on Willis's TBLT framework, revealing that the task-based program was effective in both one-way monologue (Cohen's d = 2.564*) and two-way dialogue (Cohen's d = 1.683*) tests, with a large effect size. These results support the effectiveness of the task-based method in EFL education. In the field of Chinese as a second language (CSL), Lan et al. (2016) tested the effectiveness of different types of language tasks on oral production, specifically on accuracy. The classification of task types presented by Prabhu (1987) was adopted in this study, including information tasks, reasoning tasks, and opinion-gap tasks. The research by Lan et al. (2016) revealed that all the participants under TBLT improved significantly in oral production, with a

large effect size. Specifically, students conducting the reasoning-gap task (Cohen's $d = 2.189$*) made greater progress than those doing the information-gap task (Cohen's $d = 1.299$*). Furthermore, it was discovered that nearly all participants had positive motivation and attitudes toward TBLT activities. Mulyadi et al. (2021) developed a technology-enhanced TBLT course by adapting pedagogical stages from Nielson et al. (2017) and Willis (1996) to explore the efficiency of TBLT on ESP learners' listening comprehension skills and oral production. The study found that technology-enhanced TBLT had a significant influence on students' listening comprehension skills, with a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.632$*). However, students' oral production based on role-play tasks exhibited considerable promotion, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.482$*). Therefore, a large effect size was achieved in most task-based studies in terms of its effectiveness, especially on oral performance.

In addition to task types, some variables (such as task sequences, pre-task planning, and task complexity) can also exert an influence on oral performance (BavaHarji et al., 2014; J. C. C. Chen, 2020; Khoram, 2019; Kim, 2020; M. S. Park, 2021). Kim (2020) did a research to investigate the effectiveness of task sequence on English as a second language (ESL) beginners. One set of task sequences was adopted by applying a deductive and theoretical simplify-stabilise-automatise-restructure-complexify (SSARC) model. Here, complexity, accuracy, and fluency were used to measure participants' oral performance. The results showed that the task complexity (TC) group performed better than the guided planning with vocabulary (GPV) and guided planning with content (GPC) groups in improving complexity. Moreover, the GPV

group outperformed the GPC group regarding fluency increase. The sequencing TC and GPV tasks also helped to increase complexity and fluency. However, sequencing the GPC tasks did not have any positive effect on oral production compared with the TC and GPV groups. Unfortunately, the effect sizes were not available in Kim's (2020) study.

In terms of pre-task planning, Park M. S. (2021) explored the effects of three sources of pre-task planning (teacher-led, group-based, and solitary) on EFL students' speaking production, which was based on Levelt's (1989) speech production model. The results demonstrated a general effect of planning on participants' fluency and complexity. It also revealed that solitary planning was effective in improving fluency, with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.113*). In addition, group-based planning contributed to the highest complexity marks, with a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.603*). The teacher-led planning produced more accurate oral performance complete with richer vocabulary, with a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.526*). In addition to the study of task planning in class settings, Chen J. C. C. (2020) examined the effects of task planning on improving the quality and quantity of EFL voice-based outcomes in Second Life (SL). Doughty and Long's (2003) methodological principles of TBLT were theoretically sound and pedagogically driven. They revealed that the participants exhibited statistically significant increases in grammatical complexity (with a large effect size in syntactic complexity and syntactic variety) and linguistic accuracy (with a large effect size in each measured variable). Khoram (2019) investigated the effects of both task type and pre-task planning conditions on the accuracy of students' oral production using Ellis's (2003, 2005,

2009) theory of pre-task planning and Skehan's (2001) theory of task types to design materials. The results revealed that both pre-task planning situations and task type showed a positive influence on improving the accuracy of oral production, with a large effect size. BavaHarji et al. (2014) conducted a research to explore the effects of tasks with varying complexity levels (simple, complex+, and complex++) on students' speaking performance in a multimedia TBLT context. Here, Robinson's (2001, 2003, 2007) triadic componential framework and Nunan's (2004) ranks of task difficulty were adopted to draw up tasks. The dimensions included accuracy, fluency, and complexity with eight different measures, which were used to assess oral test tasks. The results revealed that scaffolding students to complete tasks with increasing complexity levels enhanced their second language speaking performance considering accuracy, fluency, and complexity. However, no effect sizes or *p*-values were provided.

In summation, TBLT can benefit students in improving various factors, including L2 learning motivation, raising interest, and enhancing proficiency results. Moreover, it is also effective in improving students' speaking performance considering complexity and fluency, with a large effect size. Some variables included in task-based approaches (such as task sequence, task type, task complexity level, and pre-task planning condition) appear to influence the effectiveness of oral performance to different degrees and with different effect sizes. Although there is a growing body of literature on the positive effects of TBLT on CALF (complexity, accuracy, lexis, and fluency) under different task conditions (e.g., Bui et al., 2019; Li et al., 2015; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), most of these studies have shown two

features: the test type is focused on speaking production, and the testees are university students. The examinations in exam-oriented contexts (e.g., China) are different from the oral tests adopted in the studies cited above. First, in the Confucian-heritage culture contexts, the public examination format adopts traditional paper test focusing on the accuracy of grammar, vocabulary or sentence structure rather than oral tests. Second, the public examinations usually target middle school students, rather than college students. Therefore, the results of the positive influence of TBLT on improving CALF under different task conditions in previous classic TBLT studies may not prove to be appropriate in examination-oriented contexts. In addition, most of these experimental studies with positive effects of classic TBLT on learning outcomes typically lasted for a short period (e.g., 8 weeks) (González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Kim, 2020). The teacher participants in the current study conveyed that it was easy to achieve good results based on one-off task-based language teaching, but doing this regularly for an extended period may be different.

2.2.2.2 Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on TBLT Implementation

Almost 50% of TBLT studies collected information on teachers' or students' perceptions toward TBLT implementation. These opinions (or views) of TBLT constitute a good and effective way of reflecting real implementations of TBLT in specific situations. In the following section, opinions about TBLT will be reviewed in different contexts, including Canada, Iran, Mainland China, and Taiwan.

Scott and Marcia (2014) investigated teachers' perceptions and practices related to TBLT and English for academic purposes (EAP). Their study was based in the Canadian background, where an increasing number of new immigrants and foreign learners from non-English-speaking contexts have attempted to gain admission to English-medium tertiary education (Scott & Marcia, 2014). The results revealed that 69% of participants used TBLT in at least 50% of their teaching, with 86% advocating that TBLT was helpful for EAP purposes. The most commonly used tasks in EAP programs were presentation, essays, and interviews. In a similar study by Atefeh (2012), the perceptions of TBLT from learners' perspectives (88 EFL students) were investigated in Iran using a task-based questionnaire. The findings indicated that most students could understand the concepts of TBLT at a high level, and the students were willing to accept this new approach in second language teaching. However, some negative opinions were expressed about TBLT implementation.

Within the Asian context, Hu (2013) investigated the feedback of in-service instructors in China to task-based instruction using a qualitative study that included interviews and class observations. The results demonstrated that the teachers had different responses to TBLT in their daily teaching, ranging from negative rejection and passive acceptance to positive use. Similarly, Liu and Xiong (2016) explored the opinions of EFL instructors in the Chinese universities toward TBLT, considering perceptions, use of, and perceived obstacles. Their research indicated that there were some barriers to implementing TBLT in China, such as the availability of instruction materials and large class sizes. However, they experienced some

partial success, with the teaching method receiving some positive responses, even though the instructors did not understand TBLT deeply regarding its principles and practices. Taiwan conducted educational reform and introduced new curriculum guidelines in second language teaching in the mid-1990s (Lin & Wu, 2012). Here, TBLT is considered a communicative pedagogy that meets the requirements of the new English language curriculum in Taiwan. Based on that, (Lin & Wu, 2012) investigated instructors' understanding of TBLT in Taiwanese middle schools. Although their results showed that most EFL instructors had basic knowledge of task-based instruction, they seldom applied it fully in real classroom teaching (Lin & Wu, 2012). Similar results were revealed in Hong Kong, where Carless (2009) investigated instructors' (and teacher educators') opinions of TBLT in comparison with traditional PPP methods. They also investigated the extent of and reasons for the reported application of TBLT in Hong Kong secondary schools. The results indicated that although the implementation of TBLT was advised in Hong Kong's curriculum guidelines (Curriculum Development Council, 2007), this did not necessarily influence actual classroom practice. As mentioned by Tang (2004), the long-standing PPP methodology is commonly employed in Hong Kong, and instructors expressed a preference over TBLT. Further, in Carless's (2009) study of 12 teacher interviewees, 6 preferred the traditional PPP method, 3 favored the communicative task-based approach, and 3 were undecided.

Considering these teacher views and students' perceptions of TBLT in various contexts, it would appear necessary to adapt communicative pedagogy based on the needs of stakeholders

in specific settings and localise it under different educational contexts. The concrete methods for TBLT localisation in Asian areas will be reviewed in the next section.

2.3 Studies on Localised TBLT

This section explains what localised TBLT is, describes the need of localisation in different contexts, and reviews some cases of localising TBLT in Asian areas. In addition, some localisation methods of TBLT are concluded from the previous studies.

2.3.1 What is Localised TBLT?

In regard of localisation, McDonough (2015) posited that localised TBLT is a pedagogy developed and adapted from Task-Based Language Teaching in a specific teaching context. Butler (2011) determined that TBLT in Asia needs to achieve contextually embedded adaptations in local environments. Chen Q. and Wright (2017) strongly recommend modifying and localising instruction objectives in the range of task-based instruction.

Kim et al. (2017) thinks a significant character of TBLT is manifested in McDonough's (2015) definition of localised TBLT: that TBLT courses should be created based on students' specific needs. Therefore, Kim et al. (2017) designed a course that was created according to a needs

analysis conducted with various stakeholders in South Korea as an example of localised TBLT. From Kim et al.'s point of view, if the course is created based on the needs of the particular school learners in South Korea and their objectives and future use of the target language, it becomes South Korea's localised TBLT course. Carless (2016) held the view that the localised TBLT in Hong Kong should be centered on form-focused tasks and put more emphasis on grammar teaching. In Thailand, the localised TBLT is based on tasks targeting the students' real-world interests, involving Thai culture, social and environmental problems, and media programs by adopting a focus-on-form approach (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007).

Three features of the localised TBLT in Asia are revealed from these definitions, namely: making adaptations and modifications based on the classic TBLT; targeting the tasks at learners' needs (e.g., examination needs, interest, future use); incorporating focus-on form elements (e.g., grammar teaching, traditional instruction approach, focused tasks) in the actual teaching process. Therefore, one salient feature of the localised TBLT in Asian TBLT contexts is that some form-focused elements are adopted to meet the requirements of examinations and better fit in with the long-standing knowledge transmission culture. Another feature lies in the fact that the tasks in the localised TBLT are chosen based on the special needs of Asian students, including their particular needs for achieving high scores, learning interest, and English use for future. These features also cast light on the localization of TBLT in China's examination-oriented context.

2.3.2 The Need for Localisation

The implementation of TBLT in Asian areas has shown limited degrees of success (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007) on account of different education contexts, such as limited class time, large class size, Confucian culture, heavy focus on final examination results, less language use in real life, unqualified instructor's teaching ability, less professional training for teachers. (M. Park, 2012, p. 215–240). For instance, Hoang et al. (2015) explored the different effects of TBLT and the presentation-practice-production (PPP) method on Vietnamese learners' writing skills. Research results revealed that both the two teaching methods were efficient in improving students' writing performance in the target language. However, the control group (PPP condition) performed better than the experimental group (TBLT condition) regarding linguistic accuracy statistically. Pham and Do (2020) compared different impacts of TBLT and PPP on students' productivity skills, finding that there was no statistical difference between the two teaching methods in improving students' grammatical proficiency, considering speaking skills and writing skills. In China, Zhang (2018) conducted a comparative study between TBLT and PPP in English-speaking teaching for higher vocational colleges. The results show that, for lower-level students in English proficiency, PPP is more effective than TBLT. Gubera and Aruguete's (2013) findings indicated that learners in the collaborative group did not perform better than those in the traditional teaching group in terms of quiz and exam marks. Surprisingly, collaborative learning resulted in a lower satisfaction degree compared to traditional teaching.

The literature shows that it is necessary to promote TBLT from 'adoption to adaptation' (Butler, 2011) to better suit local language learning needs and cultural context. In addition, the results indicate that it is possible to incorporate traditional instruction methods into TBLT to form a localised TBLT framework in a specific context, such as China.

2.3.3 Empirical Studies of Localising Task-Based Language Teaching

Ellis (2013) commented that given the versatility of TBLT, it has great potential to fit in with various socio-cultural situations with different emphases on and attitudes towards language forms instruction. In terms of adapting TBLT to various contexts, Butler (2011) highlighted three main issues: 1) how to adapt communicative TBLT into an examination-oriented situation that focuses on the transmission of language elements; 2) how to incorporate form-focused instruction method into TBLT; and 3) how to initiate students to participate in interaction with the target language. Carless (2013) also suggested to facilitate the localisation of TBLT under different contexts and promoting small-scale success to produce 'momentum and positive sentiments' for the reform in teaching methods.

After conducting class observations and interviews with teachers and educators in one school year in Hong Kong, Carless (2007) posited a flexible 'situated version of TBLT' by placing more emphasis on grammar teaching. Here, tasks were relevant to the content of the examinations, with an emphasis on reading, writing, and oral tasks. According to

McDonough's (2015) definition of localised TBLT, the situated version used in Hong Kong was adapted from TBLT with some additional form-focused elements (e.g., grammar teaching and reading and writing tasks). This was based on Hong Kong students' specific requirements for passing examinations. Accordingly, this constitutes a good example of localised TBLT in Asian areas. Moreover, Carless (2007) suggested that a weak version of task-based instruction tends to be suitable for schooling in context-sensitive approaches.

In Thailand, a localised TBLT course was designed by an EFL team situated at a Thai university (Winitchaikul et al., 2002). The task topics were targeted at students' real-world interests (such as Thailand's culture and social problems) and were motivated by the Thai government's language policy: using English to cultivate good awareness of Thailand's culture and society. Excerpts from a commercial textbook (*Skyline*) were selected for the course. Furthermore, a focus-on-form approach with attention to linguistic forms was adopted. Therefore, based on McDonough's (2015) definition of localised TBLT, the localised task syllabus in Thai, which accounted for students' special needs and employed the focus-on-form approach, provided another example of TBLT localisation in Asia.

The successful implementation of Thai's localised TBLT course was reported by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007). This project lasted for one year and employed various research methods (task evaluation, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and field notes) to investigate the responses of instructors and learners to the localised course. The results

indicated that both instructors and learners held positive attitudes towards the localised TBLT method. Moreover, the learners became more self-directed in their study and improved both academic and efficient learning skills. However, a limitation of their study was that teachers' and (or) students' perceptions were not sufficient to determine whether a localised TBLT form is efficient in actual practice.

Kim et al. (2017) designed a task-based course in South Korea based on a needs' analysis with students. Three thematic tasks were included (the job, travelling, and campus life), which considered the needs of the particular learners in South Korea and their objectives toward and future use of English. The TBLT course was localised according to the needs and goals of South Korean students, as well as their projected future use of English. In addition, the tasks in the TBLT course were designed as focused tasks (Ellis, 2003) considering particular linguistic elements: questions (Unit 1), new words (Unit2), and the past tense (Unit 3). Willis's (1996) framework focused on tasks that encouraged learners to freely use whatever language resources they could master without concentrating on one or two linguistic forms. In comparison, the tasks used by Kim et al. (2017) focused on helping students master specific linguistic forms. Therefore, the localised TBLT course in South Korea aligned to the three localised features identified previously: making adaptations based on classic TBLT; targeting the tasks for Korean university students' specific needs; and designing focused tasks. In summation, their task-based design constitutes an example of localised TBLT in South Korea. Finally, the findings from Kim et al.'s (2017) study indicate that students' perceptions of a task-based approach changed

over time.

In summation, based on McDonough's (2015) definition, localised TBLT is an adapted and modified form of classic TBLT for particular teaching contexts. Some scholars have investigated adding focus-on-form elements into the task process (e.g., adding related grammar instructions and applying a focus-on-form approach), or choosing focused tasks that consider students' interests, learning goals, and future use of English (Carless, 2007; Kim et al., 2017; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Various research methods were used in the study in Thailand by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), involving task evaluations, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. They found that the participants held positive attitudes toward the localised TBLT method. Moreover, the skills of self-direction and English learning were achieved by the students under the localised TBLT approach (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Self-directed learning is a process where students are in charge of planning, continuing, and assessing their learning experiences (Merriam, 2001). The findings of McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) indicate that, the localised TBLT course encouraged students to learn by themselves and to address learning problems independently in real life. Further, Kim et al. (2017) discovered that students' perceptions of task-based instruction changed over time. One salient limitation of these studies was that learning outcomes from the localised TBLT forms were only reflected in teachers' or students' perceptions, without any concrete measurements of learning outcomes or indications of effect sizes. Hence, no evidence was presented to indicate its effectiveness on any specific learning

outcome. Therefore, further study is required to provide a detailed localised TBLT framework, which should examine its effectiveness in improving learning outcomes. Specifically, since TBLT is a communicative approach and the NECS (MOE, 2011) in China emphasises EFL learners' ability to use English in daily life, students' oral performance will be measured in this doctoral research to explore the effectiveness of a localised TBLT in China.

2.4 Research Gaps and Ways Forward

It is known that TBLT is a communicative and meaning-focused pedagogy that aims to improve students' language use ability. Owing to its flexibility in teaching and wide deployment among L2 teachers, Willis' TBLT framework was adapted in this study. The reviewed literature indicated that TBLT has a positive influence on learning outcomes (especially on oral performance), with a medium–large effect size (e.g., Leaver & Kaplan, 2004; Macías, 2004; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; M. Park, 2012). However, limited degrees of success in TBLT implementation have been achieved (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007). This was mainly due to the different cultural contexts in Asian areas, such as limited class time, large class sizes, and high weights in examination scores (M. Park, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to turn the direction of classic TBLT research into localised studies related to diversified contexts, with the aim of fully developing its potential to improve second language learning. Some researchers have explored adding focus-on-form elements into task processes (Carless, 2007; McDonough

& Chaikitmongkol, 2007) or localising tasks based on the specific needs of stakeholders in that particular context (Kim et al., 2017). In a project by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) in Thailand, the results indicated that both instructors and learners showed a positive attitude toward the localised task-based instruction form. Importantly, the learners improved their self-directed skills and language learning abilities by participating in the localised TBLT course. The findings of Kim et al. (2017) revealed that students' perceptions of task-based instruction changed over time. However, a salient limitation of the previously reviewed studies was that the learning outcomes of the localised TBLT forms were only reflected in teachers' or students' perceptions, with no concrete measuring of learning outcomes. Hence, they contained no evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness on any specific learning outcome. In addition, no framework for localising TBLT in Asian contexts was provided in any of the studies.

As a communicative approach, the NECS (MOE, 2001; 2011) in China emphasises the importance of adopting TBLT, which could develop students' ability to use English to tackle problems in daily life. Therefore, to fill these research gaps, the following three research questions were raised in this study: (1) What are Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to localising TBLT in China? (2) Will a localised TBLT in China be more effective than traditional pedagogy on EFL learners' oral performance, considering CAF? (3) What would constitute a possible localised framework of TBLT in China? In summation, the localised TBLT framework in this project, which is based on Mainland China's education background, attempts to localise TBLT in terms

of choosing suitable topics and adapting specific teaching procedures. Moreover, it is soon to be examined in terms of CAF. Accordingly, it should be a suitable pedagogy for EFL education in China, and this study fills the research gaps in TBLT localisation.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter 3 presents a general illustration of the type of data required and how to collect relevant data to achieve the research purpose. Five sections are included in this chapter: (1) justification of exploratory mixed methods; (2) introduction to current research design in general; (3) instruction designs; (4) measurement of oral performance; and (5) ethical considerations.

3.1 Justification of Exploratory Mixed Methods

A mixed methods approach (involving a qualitative case study and a quantitative intervention study) was used in this project for the purpose of exploring a localised TBLT framework suitable for China's examination-oriented education context.

The mixed method approach is regarded as the third model of research in social and behavioural sciences after qualitative and quantitative methods (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). It has been used since the 1950s, but it was formally introduced in the late 1980s and has been adopted by an increasing number of scholars (Creswell, 2007). Particularly, its value for educational research has been discussed recently (Ponce, 2014). Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela (2006) found that the mixed methods approach adds value by increasing the validity of the results, as well as assisting in knowledge creation. Authors who have used the mixed methods approach believe it helped them gain a deeper, broader understanding of the

phenomenon under study compared to researchers that only use the qualitative or quantitative method (Courtney et al., 2017). Another value of the mixed methods approach relates to the integration component (Courtney et al., 2017). From the readers' perspective, mixed methods research offers greater confidence in the research findings and conclusions (O'Cathain et al., 2010). Meanwhile, from the researchers' perspective, the mixed methods approach helps in developing ideas for future research (O'Cathain et al., 2010), and mixed methods research is the only way to be certain of results (Coyle & Williams, 2000; Sieber, 1973) and interpretations (Morse & Chung, 2003).

The exploratory mixed methods design presented by Green et al. (2007) comprises sequential phases (quantitative–qualitative) for conducting research. The first qualitative phase builds to a second quantitative phase to define or measure the results discovered in Phase 1 (Ponce & Pagán-Maldonado, 2015). In other words, the second quantitative phase is founded on the first exploratory qualitative results, and the collected data in the quantitative study is used for measuring, generalising, or examining the qualitative study results (Clark, 2008, pp. 5-22). Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela (2006) revealed that mixed methods added value through increasing validity in the results, in addition to assisting with knowledge creation. It is suggested that using a mixed methods approach can help to obtain a deeper and broader understanding of the phenomenon compared to research which only uses the qualitative or quantitative methods (Courtney et al., 2017).

The intention of this project is to develop a localised TBLT framework suitable for China's examination-oriented context. Enlightened by McDonough's (2015) definition of localised TBLT, we define it as an EFL pedagogy adapted from TBLT that incorporates certain aspects of traditional instruction methods and considers the specific examination-oriented context in China. The exploratory sequential mixed methods approach is appropriate to explore teachers' understanding and practice related to TBLT through a qualitative study to explore the experience of localising TBLT in an examination-oriented culture. Subsequently, the effectiveness of localised TBLT principles discovered in the first phase was examined quantitatively. Therefore, an exploratory mixed method can answer the research questions and achieve the research goal more effectively.

3.2 General Introduction to the Current Research Design

First, a case study was conducted in one middle school of Shijiazhuang, a northern city of China. At this stage, eight EFL teachers in middle schools were invited to participate in interviews and classroom observations to collect data about their understanding, practice, and suggestions related to TBLT in China. The eight teacher participants (five female and three male teachers, with an average age of 40.75 years) were selected from three different middle schools in Shijiazhuang to collect information that was more extensive and varied to answer the research questions. They have more than 9 years' EFL teaching experience. In reference to

the findings in the author's master thesis, there are no substantive differences between the north and south of China in terms of teachers' understanding and practice related to TBLT in middle schools. Moreover, education and language policies are implemented in a top-down way nationwide, without any distinction between the north and south parts of China. Hence, there was no requirement to place any special emphasis on a study of the north or south.

The EFL students in Shijiazhuang have a burning desire to enhance their oral production, either for further study or a better job in a competitive society. As required by the NECS, it is recommended that middle schools in Shijiazhuang implement TBLT in EFL education. Furthermore, because of the large population in Hebei Province, students and teachers are under significant pressure from examinations to enable them to win the Senior High School Entrance Examination and attend a better high school.

In addition, EFL teachers in Shijiazhuang have an open attitude towards a localised TBLT framework that is suitable for examination-oriented contexts, which is found in the author's master thesis (Lu, 2017). TBLT is promoted in NECS (MOE, 2001; 2011) for Shijiazhuang middle schools, with the aim of improving students' cooperative awareness, communicative skills and critical thinking abilities. According to data from the informal interviews with EFL teachers of Shijiazhuang, most are unaware of how to implement detailed teaching procedures in real practice. Therefore, EFL teachers in Shijiazhuang have a strong desire to receive accurate directions or guidelines for implementing localised TBLT efficiently.

Therefore, the case study in Shijiazhuang is more representative of (and more general to) TBLT implementation in mainland China. Semi-structured interviews were included in the case study concerning three themes: (1) what understandings the secondary school English teachers have of task-based instruction in terms of practice and implications in teaching and learning, (2) the extent to which teachers claim to apply the principles of task-based instruction in their teaching practices and (3) their opinions of localising TBLT in mainland China, In addition, classroom observations were conducted in the teacher participants' classrooms to find evidences of their TBLT implementation. The checklist for classroom observations included 6 pedagogical items, namely: pre-task (leading in/warming up/task planning), task cycle (task performance orally), language focus (grammar/vocabulary/structure), presentation (grammar/vocabulary/structure), practice (oral practice) and production (exercises). The qualitative data was analysed according to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 123–180) using three steps: 1) create open codes to classify data based on the research questions; 2) engage in axial coding to collect relevant open codes; and 3) conduct thematic coding to identify a centralised category related to the other codes, and then produce main themes from the codes concerning participants' TBLT understandings and practices in China.

After analysing the data collected through the case study, we found some characteristics of task-based instruction design localised in China. Guided by Creswell's (2007) exploratory sequential mixed methods design, we conducted an intervention study based on the results of the case study in the first phase. Here, 101 students in Grade 7 were divided into two groups

(experimental and control) and participated in the quantitative study. The experimental group received a localised TBLT pedagogy, while the control group experienced English lessons through traditional instruction methods. Teacher 5, who was one of the interviewees in Phase 1, acted as the teacher during the whole intervention period, which lasted for 15 weeks. She has rich experience in conducting cooperative and communicative language teaching in real classrooms, and her students have performed well in various examinations.

The instruction materials for the intervention study were designed by the author, the teacher participant, and another doctoral student majoring in English language education (see Section 3.3 Instruction Designs). This format was adopted to ensure the quality of the localised TBLT design and traditional EFL instruction design.

At the beginning and in the end of the intervention, student participants took a pre-test and a post-test in the form of Cambridge PET (Part 1 for self- introduction, and Part 2 for picture description). The assessment rubrics for learners' speaking performance in these tests were designed by adapting Bui and Skehan's (2018) measurement of variables and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurements (form their published papers). Considering the student participants' English proficiency in Grade Seven, in this study, fluency was assessed according to the number of words every 60 seconds and number of pauses or repetitions every 60 seconds (Bui & Huang, 2018; Skehan, 1996a). Further, accuracy was assessed according to the number of correct verb forms and number of error-free clauses (Yuan & Ellis, 2003), and complexity was

measured by the number of subordinations and number of different grammatical verb forms in this study (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Unfortunately, using different measures makes it difficult to provide a unified mark that represents the speakers' overall performance (including fluency, complexity and accuracy). Hence, it is necessary to find a unified measure to assess EFL learners' overall oral production in this study. Since the band descriptors in IELTS oral tests have a high level of fit with the measurement of CAF (see Figure 1), we adapted IELTS band descriptors based on the measurement framework of L2 oral production (see Table 7 on p. 77 of the thesis) as the evaluation scheme in this study (shown in Table 18 with elaboration on p. 150 of the thesis).

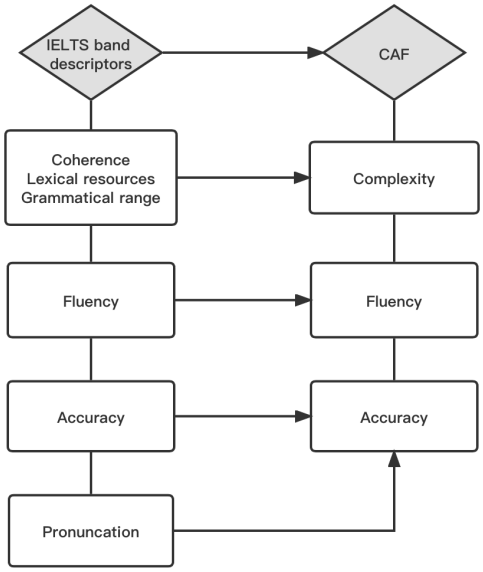


Figure 1. Relationship between IELTS Band Descriptors and CAF in this Study

The purpose of the quantitative intervention research in the second phase was to examine whether the principles or characteristics of designing localised TBLT in China are effective in

improving students' oral performance considering CAF. The design of the intervention materials built on the findings from the teachers' perspectives and practice related to TBLT in mainland China. Hence, the findings in the case study provide a basis for the following intervention study. Figure 2 shows the research design in the current study without revisions from Creswell and Clark's (2007, pp. 84–91) exploratory mixed methods design.

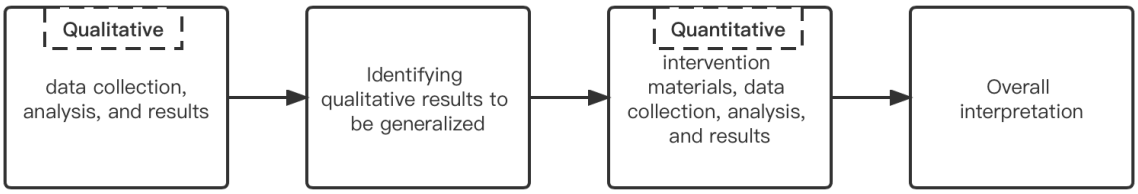


Figure 2. Exploratory Mixed Methods Design (Creswell & Clark, 2007)

3.3 Instruction Designs

The intervention study lasted for a semester with 15 weeks, with 11 different topics chosen from the People's Education Press (PEP) textbook for Grade Seven students. Enlightened by the findings of the case study, selecting task materials from the textbook is a localisation method for Chinese EFL teachers to lower the task difficulty level and to engage more students in task-based interaction. This localisation method was also used in Thailand, as reported by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007). Moreover, the textbook content matches the exam content in China, which means the localised TBLT design might be more accepted by Chinese teachers and students. Therefore, the tasks designed in the intervention study are relevant to

the learning materials in the PEP textbook. The intervention topics for each week are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Teaching Content of Each Week for the Intervention Study

Events	**Content for the intervention study**	**Time**
Pilot test	Piloting the four options	04/08/2020
Pre-test	PET test with personal information communication and family tree description	Week 1 (10/09/2020)
Treatment 1	My name's Gina.	Week 2
Treatment 2	What's this in English?	Week 3
Treatment 3	What color is it?	Week 6
Treatment 4	Good morning!	Week 7
Treatment 5	This is my sister.	Week 8
Treatment 6	Is this your pencil?	Week 9
Treatment 7	Where's my schoolbag?	Week 10
Treatment 8	Do you like bananas?	Week 11
Treatment 9	How much are these socks?	Week 12
Treatment 10	When is your birthday?	Week 13
Treatment 11	My favourite subject is science.	Week 14
Post-test	PET test with personal information communication and a room picture description	Week 15 (18/12/2020)

Based on the topics, different instruction designs were created for the experimental group (localised TBLT) and control group (traditional PPP). Three lessons were included in each week to finish a unit (topic), each lasting 50 minutes. The teaching content during the lessons for students in the experimental group were the same as that for the control group. To ensure

the lessons in the experimental group were task-based and adaptive to China's examination-oriented context, localised TBLT instruction designs were cooperatively created by the researcher and another doctoral student majoring in English language education. The localised TBLT instruction designs were created based on the findings in the case study. The researcher and the teacher participant (Teacher 5) collaboratively created traditional instruction designs.

To show clearly the teaching plans for the three lessons each week that adopt the localised TBLT and traditional instruction methods, we took the topic of Treatment 1 (My name's Gina) as an example to present the intervention materials for the experimental group (see Table 4) and control group (see Table 5). The reason the intervention materials in Treatment 1 were chosen as an example is that these instruction plans are more representative and can highlight the teaching materials for the intervention study as a whole.

Table 4. Localised TBLT Instruction Designs for the Experimental Group in Treatment 1

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 1 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Experimental Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "My name's…" and "What's your name?". 2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Greet people and introduce oneself.
Teaching Method	**Localised TBLT**
<u>Lesson Progression:</u>	

<u>Stage 1: Pre-task (In-class 15 min)</u> (for the purpose of scaffolding the task performance)

Students are divided into 10 groups, each with 5-6 students.

1.The teacher provides sample sentences and asks students to find out the language rules by themselves.

- Hi, my name's Gina.
- Hello, Cindy! I'm Dale.
- Hello, Alan. I'm Ms. Brown.
- I'm Jenny. Nice to meet you.
- What's your name?

2. A video clip will be displayed to show the real-life greeting between people. The teacher will explain in English how and when this could happen.
3. Students are advised to speak out and greet group members by using the sentence structures.

<u>Stage 2: Task cycle (In-class 15 min)</u> (for the purpose of improving students' communicative skills and higher-order thinking skills)

1. Students design and rehearse a greeting role-play with partners in English by referring to the Parts 2d and 3b in the textbook.
2. Group 1, 3, 8 are chosen to perform their role-play in front of class.
3. Three students belonging to Group 2, 4, 9 will be selected to comment and assess the previous performance in terms of content, words use, sentence structures, and pronunciation.
4. The teacher will give feedback on the overall performance and point out some mistakes if necessary.

<u>Stage 3: Language focus (presentation and practice)</u> (In-class 20 min) (aiming at helping students to master the language forms correctly)

1. The teacher presents and explains new words: name, nice, to, meet, too, your, Ms., his, and, her, she, he
2. The teacher presents and explain sample sentences:
   - My name's Gina.
   - I'm Jenny.
   - Good morning.
   - Nice to meet you.
   - What's your name?
3. The students practice sentences in Parts 2c, 2d, and 3b to master the language forms accurately.

After-class follow-up (to consolidate what students learned in class):

Activity one: Each student will be asked to design an exercise (including multiple choice, fill-in information, true or false text types) through consulting their workbook. Then, they exchange exercises with the other group members, and finish the exercises received. In the end, group members will meet together. Each one is the evaluator to provide answer and comments considering the exercise they designed.

Activity two: Students are asked to great their family members after school in English.

Activity three is online information collection. When students are at home after school, they will search on the Internet about greeting people and introducing oneself in English. Then, learners will share their work on "Class Wechat Group".

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 2 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Experimental Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "His name's…" "Her name's…" "What's your phone number?". 2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Introduce other people and talk about phone numbers.
Teaching Method	**Localised TBLT**

Lesson Progression:

Stage 1: Pre-task (In-class 15 min) (for the purpose of scaffolding the task performance)

Students are divided into 10 groups, each with 5-6 students.

1.The teacher provides sample sentences and asks students to find out the language rules by themselves.

- What's his name?
- What's her name?
- He's Eric. / His name's Eric.
- She's Mary. / Her name' Mary.
- Is he Jack?
- Yes, he is. / No, he isn't.

2. A video clip will be displayed to show a situation of introducing each other in real life. The teacher will explain it in English how and when this could happen.
3. Students work in groups to introduce their group members by using the sentence structures.

Stage 2: Task cycle (In-class 15 min) (for the purpose of improving students' communicative skills in introducing people and tell phone numbers)

1. Students write down their telephone numbers on a piece of paper, then put it in a bag.
2. Students play a yes/no game to find out the owner of their chosen phone number in groups.
3. Group 2, 4, 9 will be selected to perform the game in front of class.
4. Group 3, 5, 10 will comment and assess the previous performance in terms of content, words use, sentence structures, and pronunciation.
5. The teacher will give feedback on the overall performance and point out some mistakes if necessary.

Stage 3: Language focus (presentation and practice) (In-class 20 min) (aiming at helping students to master the language forms correctly)

1. The teacher presents and explains new words: zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, telephone, phone, number.
2. The teacher presents and explains sample sentences:
   - What's his name?
   - What's her name?
   - He's Eric. / His name's Eric.
   - She's Mary. / Her name' Mary.
   - Is he Jack?
   - Yes, he is. / No, he isn't.
   - Her phone number is 281-9176.
3. The students practice sentences in Parts 2b to master the language forms accurately.

After-class follow-up (to consolidate what students learned in class):

Activity one: Each student will be asked to design an exercise (including multiple choice, fill-in information, true or false text types) through consulting their workbook. Then, they exchange exercises with the other group members, and finish the exercises received. In the end, group members will meet together. Each one is the evaluator to provide answer and comments considering the exercise they designed.

Activity two: Students are asked to collect the phone numbers of their family members in English and try to recite them.

Activity three is about information sharing. When students are at home after school, they are advised to share the phone numbers of their family members with other students on "Class Wechat Group".

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 3 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Experimental Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "His first name's…" and "His last name's…" "Her phone number is…". 2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Design an ID card.
Teaching Method	**Localised TBLT**

Lesson Progression:

Stage 1: Pre-task (In-class 15 min) (for the purpose of scaffolding the task performance)

Students are divided into 10 groups, each with 5-6 students.

1.The teacher provides sample sentences and asks students to find out the language rules by themselves.

- Her first name is Alice.
- Her last name is Green.
- Her phone number is 951-3397.

2. Some real ID cards with personal information are provided to students, in order to let students know what information is included in an ID card and how to make an ID card.
3. Students work in groups to discuss the ID cards provided by using the sentence structures.

Stage 2: Task cycle (In-class 15 min) (for the purpose of improving students' communicative skills and higher-order thinking skills)

1. Students design their own ID card with first name, last name, and phone number included.
2. Students introduce their ID card to group members in English.
3. Group 3, 5, 10 are selected to show their ID cards in front of class.
4. Group 4, 6, 1 will comment and assess the previous performance in terms of content, words use, sentence structures, and pronunciation.
5. The teacher will give feedback on the overall performance and point out some mistakes if necessary.

Stage 3: Language focus (presentation and practice) (In-class 20 min) (aiming at helping

students to master the language forms correctly)

1. The teacher presents and explains new words: first, last, last name, friend, China, middle, school.
2. The teacher presents and explains sample sentences:
   - Her first name is Alice.
   - Her last name is Green.
   - Her phone number is 951-3397.
3. The students practice sentences on pp. 6 of the textbook to master the language forms accurately.

After-class follow-up (to consolidate what students learned in class):
Activity one: Each student will be asked to design an exercise (including multiple choice, fill-in information, true or false text types) through consulting their workbook. Then, they exchange exercises with the other group members, and finish the exercises received. In the end, group members will meet together. Each one is the evaluator to provide answer and comments considering the exercise they designed.

Activity two: Students are asked to design ID cards for their family members in English and try to recite them.

Activity three is about information sharing. When students are at home after school, they are advised to share the ID cards of their family members with other students on "Class Wechat Group".

Table 5. Traditional PPP Instruction Designs for the Control Group in Treatment 1

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 1 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Control Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "My name's…" and "What's your name?". 2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Greet people and introduce oneself.
Teaching Method	**Traditional Instruction (PPP)**
<u>Lesson Progression:</u> **<u>Stage 1: Presentation (20 min)</u> (aiming at helping students to know the language rules of**	

introducing oneself and greet people)

1. Present new words: name, nice, to, meet, too, your, Ms., his, and, her, she, he.
2. Present new phrases: my name, your name, Ms. Brown.
3. Present sample sentences:
   ①Hi, my name's Gina.
   ②I'm Jenney. Nice to meet you.
   ③What's your name?
   ④Good morning.

Stage 2: Practice: (20 min) Practice the new words and sentences by doing group work **(in order to help students to use the words and sentences correctly)**

1. Work in pairs to practice the conversations.
   - A: What's your name?
     B: Alan.
     A: Hello, Alan. I'm Ms. Brown.
   - A: Good morning! I'm Cindy.
     B: Hello, Cindy! I'm Dale.
     A: Nice to meet you.
   - A: Hi. My name's Gina.
     B: I'm Jenny. Nice to meet you!
     A: Nice to meet you, too.

2. Practice the conversations in pairs in Part 2c.

3. Work in pairs to practice the role-play conversation in Part 2d of the textbook.

Stage 3: Step3: Production (10 min) (to check whether learners can use the words and sentences to introduce themselves and greet people correctly)

1. Recite the sample sentences in Grammar Focus on pp. 3 and do a peer-assessment among group members.
2. Fill in the missing information and complete the conversation in Part 3b.

After-class homework (for the purpose of consolidating the learned words and sentence structures): Finish off the workbook exercises.

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 2 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Control Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "His name's…" "Her name's…" "What's your phone number?".

	2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Introduce other people and talk about phone numbers.
Teaching Method	**Traditional Instruction (PPP)**

Lesson Progression:

Stage 1: Presentation (20 min) (aiming at helping students to know the language rules of introducing other people and tell phone numbers)

1. The teacher presents and explains new words: zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, telephone, phone, number.
2. The teacher presents and explains sample sentences:
   - What's his name?
   - What's her name?
   - He's Eric. / His name's Eric.
   - She's Mary. / Her name' Mary.
   - Is he Jack?
   - Yes, he is. / No, he isn't.
   - Her phone number is 281-9176.

Stage 2: Practice: (20 min) Practice the new words and sentences by doing group work **(in order to help students to use the words and sentences correctly)**

1. Work in pairs to practice introducing others in a group and try to remember more names. For example

   A: My name's Dale.
   B: His name is Dale. My name's Linda.
   C: His name's Dale. Her name's Linda. My name's Frank.
   D: His name's Dale. Her name's Linda.
   His name's Frank. My name's Grace.
   ……

2. Practice asking for and give your phone numbers.
   For example:
   A: What's your telephone number?
   B: It's 281-9176.
3. Read the message in Part 2b and try to recite it.
4. Practice the numbers in English and speak out the following numbers in English: 120, 114, 119, 10086, 12315, 17951.

<u>Stage 3: Production (10 min)</u> (to check whether learners can use the words and sentences to introduce other people and tell the phone numbers correctly)

1. Recite the sample sentences in Part 1f and 2b, and then do a peer-assessment among group members.
2. Self-check: Match the sentences to make conversations on pp. 6 of the textbook.

<u>After-class homework</u> (for the purpose of consolidating the learned words and sentence structures): Finish off the workbook exercises.

Topic: My name's Gina **(Lesson 3 in Treatment 1)**	
Target Students	Control Group
Class Duration	50 minutes
Lesson Objectives	Upon completion of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the sentence of "His first name's…" and "His last name's…" "Her phone number is…". 2. Use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Design an ID card.
Teaching Method	**Traditional Instruction (PPP)**

<u>Lesson Progression:</u>

<u>Stage 1: Presentation (20 min)</u> (aiming at helping students to know the language rules of making an ID card)

1. The teacher presents and explains new words: first, last, last name, friend, China, middle, school.
2. The teacher presents and explains sample sentences:
   - Her first name is Alice.
   - Her last name is Green.
   - Her phone number is 951-3397.

<u>Stage 2: Practice: (20 min)</u> Practice the new words and sentences by doing group work **(in order to help students to use the words and sentences correctly)**

1. Tell the first name and last name, as well as the telephone numbers

Eric Brown	281-9176
Gina Smith	232-4672
Dale Miller	357-5689
Zhang Mingming	358-6433
Jenny Green	257-8900

Mary Brown 929-3155

2. Use the above information to complete the sentences.
   - His/Her first name is_____.
   - His/Her last name is_____.
   - His/Her phone number is_____.
3. Practice the completed sentences and try to recite them.
   ……

5. Practice asking for and give your phone numbers.
   For example:
   A: What's your telephone number?
   B: It's 281-9176.
6. Read the message in Part 2b and try to recite it.
7. Practice the numbers in English and speak out the following numbers in English: 120, 114, 119, 10086, 12315, 17951.

Stage 3: Production (10 min) (to check whether learners can use the words and sentences to make and describe an ID card correctly)

1. Recite the sample sentences in Part 2b, and then do a peer-assessment among group members.
2. Fill in the students' own ID cards and write about themselves. For example: My first name is…
   My last name is…
   My phone number is…

After-class homework (for the purpose of consolidating the learned words and sentence structures): Finish off the workbook exercises.

There were three lessons in the first treatment, with three different sub-themes: (1) greet people and introduce oneself; (2) introduce other people and talk about phone numbers and (3) make an ID card for oneself. Upon completion of the three lessons, students should be able to (1) demonstrate awareness of the following phrases: 'My name's…', 'What's your name?', 'His name's…', 'Her name's…', 'What's your phone number?', 'His first name's…', 'His last name's…' and 'Her phone number is…'; (2) use the target sentence structures to talk about imaginary situations; and (3) greet people and introduce oneself in English, introduce other

people and talk about phone numbers in English and design an ID card in English.

In the localised TBLT instruction designs, three stages were included: (1) pre-task for 15 minutes, for scaffolding the following task performance; (2) task cycle for 15 minutes, aimed at improving students' communicative skills and higher-order thinking skills; and (3) focus on form for 20 minutes, aimed at helping students master language forms correctly. After-class follow-ups were also designed to consolidate what students learned in class. In traditional PPP designs, there are also three stages: (1) presentation for 20 minutes, aimed at helping students understand language rules; (2) practice for 20 minutes, to help students use words and sentences correctly; and (3) production for 10 minutes, to confirm whether learners can use the language forms correctly.

3.4 Measurement of Oral Performance

Housen and Kuiken (2009) indicated that CAF are distinct components of foreign language production and proficiency. This section elaborates on the definitions of CAF and further explains the measurement of the three dimensions, which will provide some further enlightenment when designing an evaluation framework for measuring students' oral performance in the intervention study.

3.4.1 Defining Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency

Despite the long-standing research interest in CAF, the triad remains controversial, and a lot of questions remain unsettled. For example, how complexity, accuracy, and fluency should be defined (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). Among the various definitions and interpretations of CAF, Skehan's (1996a) definition of the triad has been extensively tested and enjoys popularity (Liu, 2011). Accordingly, this section mainly explains complexity, accuracy, and fluency from Skehan's (1996a) perspective.

Skehan (1996a) identified that performing like a native speaker constitutes a general target for a foreign language learner. According to Skehan (1996a), accuracy is related to "a learner's ability to cope with whatever level of interlanguage complexity she or he has learned" (p. 46). According to this account, if a student wants to perform a foreign language in an accurate way, they are trying to control the linguistic elements of the target language. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that encouraging students to produce more accurate language can promote controlled (as opposed to automatic) processes (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010). In addition, McLaughlin and Heredia (1996) posited that automatic processes are developed from controlled processes, which proves that accuracy is essential in L2 learning.

As far as Skehan (1996a) holds that, complexity is related to "the stage and elaboration of underlying interlanguage system" (p. 46). He also referred to complexity as restructuring,

which is related to ‘the process by which the interlanguage system becomes more complex, elaborate, and structured’ (McLaughlin, 1990). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) posited that ‘elaborated language’ should be considered from two perspectives: advanced development of the target language that is not completely automatic and students’ readiness and eagerness to apply a wide range of linguistic elements.

With respect to fluency, Skehan (1996a) argued that this concerns a student’s proficiency to use the interlanguage system to exchange information in real life, meaning speaking at reasonably normal rates, which would be close to native-language speech rates. Usually, the level of fluency is established by features involving rate, pausing, reformulation, hesitation, redundancy, and the use of lexical units (Bygate, 1987). Importantly, an appropriate level of fluency should be achieved supposing that a learner tends to be regarded as a proficient speaker (Schmidt, 1983). A bad performance in fluency can result in unsuccessful interactions, deeper discussions, and failure in further learning (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

The majority of studies used CAF to measure L2 learners’ speaking performance, although the pronunciation dimension was excluded (e.g., Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010; Bui & Skehan, 2018; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). The reason for this could be that pronunciation performance can be partly included in the dimension of accuracy. As indicated by Skehan (1996a), accuracy considers a students’ beliefs in rules, and production is similar to that of a native speaker. Admittedly, pronunciation rules are included in the norms or features of a foreign language. Importantly, if

the pronunciation of a word does not conform to the pronunciation rules, and this negatively influences understanding of meaning, then this would be considered inaccurate in terms of accuracy.

3.4.2 Measuring Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency

Different projects have used different schemes to measure the three dimensions of CAF (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010; Bui & Skehan, 2018; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). The measurement schemes of Skehan (1996a) and Yuan and Ellis (2003) have been validated by other studies (Housen & Kuiken, 2009) and have displayed sensitivity in capturing variances. Therefore, these two CAF measurement schemes are elaborated upon in more detail to clarify how to evaluate students' oral performance in this study (see Table 6).

Table 6. Measurement Schemes of Oral Performance

Dimensions	**Accuracy**	**Fluency**	**Complexity**
Bui and Skehan (2018)	The percentage of error-free clauses to all clauses	1. Speed; 2. Breakdown fluency; 3. Repair fluency:	1. Structural complexity; 2. Lexical complexity
Yuan and Ellis (2003)	1. Error-free clauses 2. Correct verb forms	1.Number of syllables per minute 2. Number of meaningful syllables per minute	1. Syntactic complexity; 2. Syntactic variety; 3. Mean segmental Type-Token Ratio

(Bui & Skehan, 2018; Yuan & Ellis, 2003)

Bui and Skehan's (2018) measurement scheme is elaborated upon as follows:

Complexity: Complexity in TBLT is regarded as the elaborateness of a speaking outcome, meaning the extent to which the learner could use more advanced expressions (Bui & Skehan, 2018). Complexity is typically assessed by structural complexity (e.g., the ratio of subordination or length of a clause/AS unit and the range of grammatical structures) and/or lexical complexity (e.g., lexical diversity, sophistication, and density) (Bui & Skehan, 2018).

Accuracy: Bui and Skehan (2018) posited that linguistic accuracy is the degree to which students abide by the foreign language rules. Different from complexity, an inclination to accuracy shows a student's conservative attitude, rather than adventurous action. For measuring the accuracy of oral performance, they suggest using the classic and most widely applied scale of the percentage of error-free clauses to all clauses (Bui & Skehan, 2018).

Fluency: According to Bui and Skehan (2018), fluency refers to the smoothness and ease of a learner's language. In TBLT, utterance fluency is the main focus, which can be further measured by speed (words or syllabus every 60 seconds), breakdown fluency (the length and frequency of pauses), and repair fluency (repetition, reformulation, replacement, and false starts) (Skehan, 2003).

Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement variables are described as follows:

Accuracy is assessed by error-free clauses (the ratio of clauses that do not include any mistakes)

and correct verb forms (the ratio of correctly used verbs considering tense, aspect, modality, and subject-verb agreement). In comparison, fluency is measured by the number of syllables every 60 seconds and the number of meaningful syllables every 60 seconds. Complexity is measured by syntactic complexity (the ratio of clauses to T-units in the learners' outcome), syntactic variety (the total number of different grammatical verb forms, including tense, modality, and voice), and the average segmental type-token percentage.

Bui and Skehan (2018) determined that accuracy can be measured by the ratio of error-free clauses to all clauses. Foster and Skehan (1999) adopted that approach in other projects and found it to be a sensitive measure for identifying speaking differences between learners. Yuan and Ellis (2003) also examined learners' accuracy level through measuring the ratio of error-free clauses. Moreover, the ratio of correct verb forms was employed to indicate accuracy levels, as applying multiple measures to evaluate each dimension of L2 production can contribute to a more valid evaluation (Ellis, 2005). In the current study, taking student participants' English proficiency (English starters with limited speaking skills based on the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) result) into consideration, two generalised measures were adopted: number of correct verb forms and number of error-free clauses.

In Bui and Skehan's (2018) framework, fluency was measured by speed, pauses, and repair fluency. This was also adopted by Bui and Huang (2018), demonstrating significant differences between learners' fluency. Yuan and Ellis (2003) listed another two measures for examining

the fluency levels of oral L2 performance: Rate A (number of syllables produced per minute) and Rate B (number of meaningful syllables excluding syllables, words, and phrases that were repeated, reformulated, or replaced per minute). Here, Rate A measures the same speed mentioned in Bui and Skehan's (2018) framework, while Rate B is similar (with pauses and repair fluency) to Bui and Skehan's (2018) dimensions. Rates A and B were also used by Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2010), indicating the comparability of the results to some extent. In this project, the following two scales were adopted to assess fluency levels: the number of words every 60 seconds and the number of pauses or repetitions every 60 seconds.

Skehan and Foster (1999) discovered that the number of clausal subordinations was a reliable scale that could assess sensitivity in many experimental studies and was related to some other complexity measures, such as lexical diversity. Dembovskaya (2009) also applied this measure in his study, with good reliability reported. In Bui and Skehan (2018), complexity was measured by structural complexity (e.g., percentage of subordinations and number of grammatical structures) and lexical complexity (e.g., lexical diversity). These two measures are supported by Yuan and Ellis's (2003) syntactic complexity (amounts of subordinations) and syntactic variety (the total number of different grammatical verb forms), respectively. Moreover, in Yuan and Ellis (2003), the mean segmental type-token ratio was also measured to increase the validity of the assessments. In this project, based on the two modes of measuring complexity and English proficiency level, the following two measures were employed: syntactic complexity and syntactic variety.

In summation, inspired by the CAF measurements of Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis (2003), an adapted measurement framework for L2 oral production was employed (see Table 7) in this intervention study.

Table 7. Measurement Framework of Oral Production Used in this Study

Dimensions	Measures	Description
Fluency	1. Number of words per minute	Total words per minute after deletion of filled pauses, reformulations, replacements, false starts, and repetitions.
	2. Number of pauses or repetitions per minute	The mean number of mid-clause pauses in a minute that were >0.4 s or filled pauses (e.g., "er"), and repetitions, operationalised as words, phrases or clauses that were repeated with no modification to syntax, morphology, or word order.
Accuracy	3. Number of correct verb forms	The number of all verbs that were used accurately considering pronunciation, tense, aspect, modality, and subject–verb agreement.
	4. Number of error-free clauses	The number of clauses that did not include any mistakes. Any errors related to pronunciation, syntax, morphology, or lexical choice were taken into consideration.
Complexity	5. Syntactic complexity	The number of subordinations.
	6. Syntactic variety	The number of different grammatical verb forms appeared in a participant's production. Considering participants' English proficiency in Grade 7, we used third person singular form (e.g., has, is, does, etc.) and modal verbs as the grammatical verb forms for analysis.

(Adapted from Bui & Skehan, 2018; Yuan & Ellis, 2003)

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The intention of this project was to discover middle school teachers' perceptions of task-based instruction, to create the principles and a framework for a localised TBLT in China. The localised TBLT design from the qualitative study was tested with an intervention study comprising 101 middle school students. Hence, this study constitutes human research, and ethical issues must be considered. Initially, all the volunteer participants were informed of the content and methodology applied in this project. They knew the information collected from them would be used for further study and might be published in the future. There was no risk for participants, and all were voluntary. The students and teachers had many opportunities to drop out of the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to them remained confidential, and it would be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher and another doctoral student who helped to code data for reliability.

Further, as the students in the two classes were under the age of 18 years, their parents were also provided with information about the research, and their consent was also obtained. They knew the intervention study had no risk to their children, whose privacy was also protected during and after the research. Since the chosen students in the two natural classes belonged to one middle school in Shijiazhuang, the school leader and teaching principal had the right to know each procedure of the current research. Their consent was key to entering the school to conduct the intervention. Moreover, the leaders could stop the study at any time for any reason.

Initially, some parents expressed doubts about offering different treatments to different students, rendering it difficult to obtain their consent. Parents with children in the experimental group (localised TBLT) worried that the new teaching method might have a negative influence on the learners' English learning outcomes, specifically on their examination results. This was understandable, as the intervention method was a new pedagogy. In comparison, parents with children in the control group (PPP) were concerned that their children might be left behind in developing language use skills. To address this problem, the researcher had a discussion with school leaders and finally reached an agreement to allow students and parents to choose their groups voluntarily. The parents and their children then consulted with each other to decide in which group to participate. Accordingly, ethical issues related to this research were considered, and some obstacles in promoting the study were also addressed with the assistance of school leaders, instructors, and learners from the selected middle school.

Chapter 4: The Case Study

This chapter focuses on the case study, the aim of which was to determine the Chinese EFL teachers' understanding and practice related to TBLT. In addition, their suggestions for localising TBLT in the examination-oriented culture of China were studied. The findings in this chapter will inform the localised TBLT instruction design used for the subsequent intervention study. Chapter 4 includes five sections: (1) sites and participants; (2) instruments; (3) data collection procedures; (4) data analysis method; and (5) a report of the intervention study results.

4.1 Sites and Participants

Some scholars have suggested that the Asian education context is inappropriate for implementing task-based instruction (Butler, 2011). This is owing to the lack of real-world tasks, target language needs in real life, and limited communication opportunities in inherently large classes (Butler, 2011). However, there is an increasing demand to develop foreign language proficiency in Asia (Butler, 2004). Located in eastern Asia, Mainland China also has a growing need to improve EFL learners' communicative skills to meet the challenges presented by globalisation. The government has also enacted reforms in EFL education in China, including the recommendation of using TBLT suggested in the NECS.

As mentioned previously, there is no substantial difference in language education conditions between the north and south areas of China. This is due to nationwide top-down policy implementation and the same teaching and learning evaluation system. The information gleaned from the pilot study of this research and the findings in the author's (Lu, 2017) master thesis also proved this issue. Hence, there was no requirement for differentiating between the situations in north and south China in the current study.

Teachers in Shijiazhuang should have an open attitude towards a localised TBLT framework that is suitable for examination-oriented contexts, which is discovered in the writer's master thesis. The Shijiazhuang Education Bureau in Hebei province is directed and guided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in language policy implementation. As presented previously, the MOE (2001; 2011) put forward NECS in 2001 and 2011, which promoted TBLT for the purpose of improving students' cooperative awareness, communicative skills, and critical thinking abilities. Although the policy is conveyed to teachers in this region, most EFL instructors are not clear about the detailed teaching procedures in real practice. This is a common problem among teachers in Shijiazhuang (and across China) (Han, 2014). Hence, EFL teachers have a strong desire to receive accurate directions or guidelines for implementing localised TBLT efficiently.

Students in Shijiazhuang also need to improve their communicative skills in English (Littlewood, 2007). Furthermore, an increasing number of students in Shijiazhuang prefer to

continue further education or work for life in first-tier cities such as Beijing in China (Hu, 2013). This has increased the demand for students with English proficiency. Faced with enrolment pressures, EFL learners in Shijiazhuang are not only required to achieve high marks in examinations; they also need to acquire communicative skills in real contexts. Traditional teaching methods emphasise knowledge transmission and language forms that cannot meet the current requirements for English skills. Hence, there is an urgent need for EFL learners to improve their oral communication skills through a communicative TBLT method. Based on this illustration, Shijiazhuang is more representative of (and more general to) TBLT implementation in mainland China.

Table 8. Basic Information about Teacher Participants

Name	Sex	Age (Years)	Teaching experience	Professional title	Middle School
Teacher 1	Female	47	25 years	Senior	School A
Teacher 2	Female	43	20 years		School A
Teacher 3	Female	39	16 years		School A
Teacher 4	Male	47	25 years	Senior	School A
Teacher 5	Female	32	9 years		School B
Teacher 6	Male	45	23 years	Senior	School B
Teacher 7	Female	30	6 years		School C
Teacher 8	Male	43	21 years	Senior	School C

One requirement for choosing informants for the case study was that they should be either senior EFL teachers or have enough experience in using communicative TBLT in real

classrooms. Based on this premise, eight EFL teachers from three middle schools in Shijiazhuang were selected for data collection pertaining to their perceptions and practices related to TBLT in daily teaching. As stated previously, the aim of the study was to find evidence for localising TBLT in Mainland China. Moreover, selecting participants from different schools also ensured a broad range of qualitative information. Table 8 presents basic information about the teacher participants. We coded them as Teacher 1 to Teacher 8. All names appeared in the thesis are pseudonyms to protect the participants' privacy.

Schools A and B are two public middle schools, and School C is a private middle school in Shijiazhuang. Considering that different schools have different training methods for teachers, this can result in instructors having their own understanding of teaching. Therefore, recruiting teachers from different schools also provided the advantage of collecting extensive and varied information to answer the research questions. Five female and three male teachers were selected from three different middle schools in Shijiazhuang, with an average age of 40.75 years. Among these, Teachers 1, 4, 6, and 8 are senior EFL teachers. The selected participants were experienced in the innovative use of communicative EFL teaching methods and in improving students' final examination results. Importantly, they were all willing to accept a new pedagogy, they expected to make achievements in teaching, and they had their own ideas about TBLT. For these reasons, their understanding and practice related to localised TBLT could reflect the current state of using task-based instruction in China more effectively, while also providing high quality information to answer RQ1.

4.2 Instruments

The interview guidelines and checklists for classroom observation were used to collect the qualitative data. Interviews are a commonly used research method in qualitative studies and were applied to collect data for RQ1: 'What are the Chinese EFL instructors' understanding and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to localising TBLT in China?' Watling and James (2007) demonstrated the meaningfulness of a qualitative study when researchers intend to understand rather than find facts, interpret rather than measure, and search for values rather than information. Interviews are particularly useful for discovering the story behind an interviewee's experience (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Compared with quantitative research, qualitative questions are usually open-ended, and informants respond based on their own experience. Interviews are the most commonly applied approach to ask questions, and their popularity is due to them being considered 'natural talking' (Griffee, 2005). Schultze and Avital (2011) also posited that the interviews can provide detailed contextual accounts of interviewees' experiences and perceptions. Interviews can be classified as structured, unstructured, or semi-structured. The current research used semi-structured interviews, during which the interviewer used predetermined questions and was allowed to seek clarification (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In semi-structured interviews, an interview guide is designed beforehand aiming at gathering similar kinds of information and forming a sense of order (David & Sutton, 2004). However, the interviews were flexible in nature, and the researcher was at liberty to mutate the sequence and rephrase the interview questions (Power et al., 2010). This can help the researcher uncover issues that happen spontaneously (Lune &

Berg, 2017).

In this research, initially developed semi-structured interview guidelines involved three main topics: 1) What understandings do the Chinese EFL teachers have of TBLT in terms of practice and implications in teaching and learning? 2) To what extent do the Chinese EFL teachers claim to apply the principles of TBLT in daily teaching? And 3) What suggestions do they have of localising TBLT in mainland China? An interview outline with detailed interview questions is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9. Interview Questions under each Interview Theme

Interview themes	**Interview questions**
1.What understandings do secondary school English teachers have of task-based instruction in terms of practice and implications in teaching and learning?	1.Which type of teaching method do you use often in EFL teaching classes? Why? Is there any difference in teaching effects compared to task-based instruction?
	2.What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of TBLT?
	3. What do you think of the obstacle that stops you from designing and implementing task-based instruction?
2.To what extent do teachers claim to apply the principles of task-based instruction in their teaching practices?	4. What activities do you think are better for promoting task-based interaction?
	5. In what condition will you use TBLT?
	6. Please give us one or two examples? Is there any effect after implementing task-based language teaching?
3. What opinions do they have of localising TBLT in mainland China?	7. From your perspective, is it necessary to localise TBLT in China?
	8. Under the Chinese examination-oriented background, what aspects of TBLT need to be modified in your opinion?
	9. Have you ever practiced these modifications in your class? Any examples?

The first six interview questions, regarding informants' understanding and practice of TBLT were borrowed from Lin and Wu's (2012) study. The last three questions, relating to the Chinese EFL teachers' suggestions of localizing TBLT, were created by the researcher to discover enough information about TBLT localisation in examination-oriented context. It should be noted that semi-structured interviews can help to increase the validity of the research through collecting rich information for further analysis (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The interviews helped the researcher to explore middle school teachers' perceptions or understanding of task-based instruction. The subsequent classroom observations helped the author to collect information on participants' real practice experiences of TBLT based on their own understanding in classrooms, which proved useful when creating the localised TBLT framework. Classroom observations, which were developed in the 1950s, are another commonly used method in educational research. Teaching classes represent a good environment for studying teaching and learning, as they are full of rich and meaningful research elements. The classroom observations in this thesis were aimed at revealing evidence of teachers' TBLT processes. The checklist employed for the classroom observations is displayed in Table 10.

The interviews and classroom observations provided rich information on participants' perceptions of TBLT and their real practice experiences of task-based instruction in classrooms. The illustrated methods for data collection answered the first research question considering

teachers' understanding and practice related to TBLT, as well as eliciting their suggestions on localising TBLT in the examination-oriented culture of China.

Table 10. Checklist for Classroom Observations

Pedagogical items	**Evidence and time-consuming in classroom**
Pre-task (leading in/warming up/task planning)	
Task cycle (task performance orally)	
Language focus (grammar/vocabulary/structure)	
Presentation (grammar/vocabulary/structure)	
Practice (oral practice)	
Production (Exercises)	

4.3 Data Collection Procedures for the Case Study

Three main stages were included in the qualitative data collection process: pilot interviews, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. This section further elaborates the three stages one by one.

Stage one: Pilot interviews

Before the case study, we did pilot interviews with two EFL instructors who owned over 10

years' teaching experience from one middle school. This helped the main interviews to proceed fluently and successfully. Each pilot interview was held in the participant's office, lasted approximately 30 minutes, and was audio recorded. The following three themes were included in the interview process: What understandings do the secondary school English teachers have of task-based instruction in terms of practice and implications for teaching and learning? To what extent do teachers claim to apply the principles of task-based instruction to their teaching practices? What opinions do students have of localising TBLT in mainland China? For each of the three themes, three interview questions were developed (see Table 9).

The two interviewees in the pilot interviews were not included in the eight instructors for the case study. Two teacher participants were selected from School A (Teacher A was female and Teacher B was male). Both teachers had more than 10 years' teaching experience and showed interest in task-based instruction. The pilot interview data were then analysed using the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 123–180). According to the theory, three steps were conducted while analysing the qualitative data: 1) create open codes to classify data based on the first research question, regarding the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions on localising TBLT in an examination-oriented context. 2) Axial coding was performed to collect relevant open codes. 3) Thematic coding was performed to summarise a centralised category related to the other codes and then produce main themes from the codes related to the participants' understanding and practice related to TBLT in China.

The pilot interview data showed that Teacher A had a positive attitude towards task-based instruction in China. She discovered that TBLT was helpful for creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere to motivate more students in learning English. Moreover, Teacher A realised that the top students with stronger English proficiency always communicated more. Similarly, Teacher B held a supportive view of task-based instruction in China. He pointed out the advantages of TBLT from the perspective of language policy conducted in China, such as the National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) (MOE, 2011). The TBLT approach was recommended in NECS (MOE, 2011) because it significantly improves students' language-use abilities and higher-order thinking skills. In practising TBLT, Teacher B also found that the tasks were helpful in broadening students' English knowledge when they prepared for task performance outside of class. However, in their pilot interviews, Teacher A and Teacher B stated that they seldom used TBLT in daily teaching because of obstacles in China's examination-oriented context, such as students' need to prepare for examinations and limited in-class implementation time. At the end of the pilot interviews, Teachers A and B both suggested localising communicative TBLT by designing focused tasks and adding focus-on-form elements when implementing task-based instruction methods in the classroom. All in all, the pilot interviews were successful in collecting information for RQ 1 (What are the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to localising TBLT in China?), indicating that the proposed interview questions are feasible for the current project's formal case study.

After the pilot interviews, we made some modifications to the interview questions from two perspectives: wording and sequencing. The teachers were confused when faced with academic terms such as ‘pedagogy’, ‘TBLT’, and ‘teaching method’. This is because they were middle school teachers with a focus on practical teaching processes and student learning outcomes rather than on academic research. Therefore, we changed the wording of these expressions, such as ‘method’, ‘task’, or ‘teaching steps’. Then, the revision was concerned with the sequencing of questions during the interview process. According to the interview guidelines, the teachers’ understanding of TBLT was separated from their real practice in daily teaching. Since the designed interview guideline appeared impractical and incoherent in real interviews, we asked these questions in turn for the main study. For example, after the first interview question, ‘Which type of teaching method do you use often in EFL classes? Why?’ the sixth interview question, ‘Please give us one or two examples? Is there any effect after implementing task-based language teaching?’ would be asked to collect data on their actual practice. The final interview questions are listed in Table 9.

Stage two: Semi-structured interviews

After modifying some of the wordings and sequencing of the interview questions, the finalised interview questions were administered to eight EFL teachers from three middle schools in Shijiazhuang. The questions were based on three themes: 1) What understandings do the Chinese EFL teachers have of TBLT in terms of practice and implications in teaching and

learning? 2) To what extent do the Chinese EFL teachers claim to apply the principles of TBLT in daily teaching? 3) What suggestions do they have of localising TBLT in China? The justifications for the site and the participants were illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. Detailed interview information, including the time and place (or media used), is displayed in Table 11.

Table 11. Detailed Interview Information

Interviewee	Interview Time	Interview Place (or media)
Teacher 1	03/09/2020	Meeting room
Teacher 2	04/09/2020	Office
Teacher 3	05/09/2020	A coffee shop
Teacher 4	06/09/2020	Weichat
Teacher 5	28/08/2020	Meeting room
Teacher 6	26/08/2020	Telephone
Teacher 7	01/09/2020	Office
Teacher 8	20/08/2020	Meeting room

Stage Three: Classroom observations

After each interview, we had a discussion with the interviewees about their TBLT class for observation and agreed on a schedule, which was audio-recorded subject to the agreement of the instructor. We mainly observed their teaching procedures, activities, and content in each step and made records based on a checklist (Table 10) for the classroom observations. To provide supplementary details that might have been missing during the observations, we collected the teachers' instruction designs for their TBLT class for reference purposes. All observations were completed prior to 15/09/2020.

4.4 Data Analysis Procedures of the Case Study

The qualitative information collected in the case study (interviews and classroom observations) were analysed through the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp.123-180). Charmaz (2014) posited that data coding could offer important connections between data collection and developing a new theory, for that a grounded theory practiced to produce the bones of one's analysis (p. 113). Hence, based on grounded theory, three steps were adopted when analysing the qualitative data: 1) create open codes to classify data based on the research questions; 2) axial coding to collect relevant open codes; and 3) thematic coding to summarise a centralised category related to the other codes and then produce main themes from the codes related to participants' understandings and practice related to TBLT in China.

Table 12. Coding Scheme for Interviews

Codes		**Evidence**
Understanding the implementation of TBLT	Advantages	
	Disadvantages	
	Activities	
Real practice of TBLT	Examples	
	Effects	
	Obstacles	
Perceptions of the localised TBLT	Advantages	
	Disadvantages	
	Suggestions	

To ensure reliable coding, another doctoral researcher in EFL education was invited to code the qualitative data based on the coding schemes. Any identified differences were discussed

and resolved through continued negotiation and recoding until reliability reached >89%. The qualitative data analytical framework for the interviews was designed based on the interview themes displayed in Table 12. The coding schemes for the classroom observations and instruction design analysis were created according to the checklist for observations (Table 13).

Table 13. Coding Framework for Classroom Observations

Codes	**Evidence**
Pre-task content or activities	
Task cycle content or activities	
Language focus content or activities	
Presentation content or activities	
Practice content or activities	
Production content or activities	

4.5 Case Study Results

The qualitative data indicated that the Chinese EFL teachers have their own perceptions of TBLT considering its advantages and implementation obstacles. In actual practice, the teachers used TBLT either infrequently or in limited class time. In addition, they also provided some suggestions for localising TBLT in China.

4.5.1 Chinese EFL Teachers' Understanding of TBLT in China

Through an analysis of the qualitative information, we identified two themes regarding teachers' understanding of TBLT in mainland China: the advantages and obstacles related to implementing TBLT in middle school EFL classes. This section focuses on reporting the informants' perceptions of these advantages and obstacles during task-based instruction according to their own teaching experiences.

4.5.1.1 Understanding the Advantages of TBLT in China

According to the interview data, the advantages of TBLT centred on three aspects: motivating EFL learning, engaging more students and having less fear of making mistakes. Such advantages promoted EFL teachers in middle schools in China to adapt TBLT in their classrooms.

Motivating EFL Learning

The most common answer to this statement was an increase in students' EFL learning interest and motivation, which could have been caused by the 'fun' and 'interesting' aspects of the tasks. Teacher 5's statement indicated that students were exposed to traditional approaches in EFL lessons for most cases. However, they were less motivated to attend boring lectures full of language items. Therefore, a task-based lesson where students could participate in English

significantly improved their interest and motivation to learn English.

> *Teacher 5: … Students in my class are usually expecting a task-based lesson because they will be asked to tackle real problems in a certain context and can be freer to talk about things in English. They feel happy to go into a shopping mall together with partners and use English to buy things they need. They also feel interested to do a survey about school affairs in English...*

Teacher 4 mentioned the positive role of using video clips when implementing task-based teaching, which was helpful in triggering learning motivation. Moreover, an interest in the content of English knowledge could be a good starting point for language study. However, Teacher 4 made an important point about the problem of classroom order, which tested the teachers' class control abilities.

> *Teacher 4: … Prior to introducing the task topic, I will show students a movie or an English song related to the topic. All of their (students') eyes open wide and are hungry for knowledge. They then fall into a lively discussion of the task. At this moment, I know students' interest in English is stimulated. My focus now is on classroom management and to avoid a disordered situation to guarantee the following steps in TBLT go smoothly…*

Teacher 7 also suggested that an interesting task instead of boring grammar was more useful

for motivating students in EFL learning.

> *Teacher 7: … Boring lectures full of vocabulary and grammar decrease students' interest in learning English, particularly for beginners. In my class, sometimes a simple task is helpful to arouse their initiative and motivate more students to learn English…*

Teacher 8 suggested a new perspective that TBLT was more helpful in motivating the average students in one class. The reason may be that these students can quickly acquire the new language forms but are less motivated in EFL learning. Once they are allowed to discuss an interesting topic, their motivation to learn English will be aroused.

> *Teacher 8: … Some students in my class seldom answer questions when I teach them grammar rules. They are negative to make sentences by using the structures I presented on the blackboard. However, in task-based instruction lessons, the 'shy' students in regular classes become active and tend to produce more sentences when talking about a topic. The average students are usually motivated in task-based interaction…*

Improvement of Student Engagement

According to Kuh et al. (2007), student engagement is defined as participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to positive learning

outcomes. In general, engagement has three types: (1) engagement in thought, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's thinking; (2) engagement in feeling, for example, students' sense of connectedness to, interest in, and passion for learning content; (3) engagement in action, for instance, contributing to class, finishing assignments and doing academic tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004). In localised TBLT, task engagement involves participating in task-based interaction in classroom, doing task preparation work before class, performing the task actively and commenting on others' performance in class, etc. Six of the teachers noticed an improvement in student engagement during the task-based interactions. Many explained that this was because of the learner-centred feature of TBLT. In a task-based lesson, students were provided with opportunities to communicate with others instead of simply sitting, listening, or taking notes.

Teacher 8 highlighted an advantage of group work in TBLT, where students with good levels of proficiency could help those with lower proficiency levels through task-based communication. Input and intake are two components in second-language acquisition. Input refers to what information is available in principle to a student for the purpose of addressing a problem. In contrast, intake refers to how much information the learner can acquire and obtain (Nunan, 2005). Helping less advanced group members proved rewarding for the advanced students because task-based interactions could provide more chances for them to practice and obtain the language items to help less advanced students to understand more clearly. Hence, as mentioned by Teacher 4 in the interview, the process of explaining themselves to less advanced

students contributed to acquiring new knowledge and converted input into intake for the top students. In this way, less advanced students were encouraged to learn English by other group members, resulting in more students being involved in the study.

> *Teacher 8: … In my task-based class, I usually let students finish tasks through group work. There are 6 to 8 students in one group involving two advanced students and two less advanced students as well as some intermediate students. In group discussions based on a task, the less advanced students in a group will be encouraged by other group members and open their mouths to speak…I think that task-based interactions are a good way of engaging more students in English learning…*

Teacher 1 also praised the advantages of task-based interaction in engaging less advanced students in English learning. The teacher would also be assisted by the group leaders in classroom management, so that she could focus on more students, including the less advanced ones.

> *Teacher 1: …In my English class, the less advanced students (approximately five to six students) always keep silent. I don't know what they were doing when I presented or explained the language rules. When the task-based interaction method is adopted, the less advanced students are noticed and encouraged by their group leaders in English learning. The group leaders also assign tasks to them in group work according to their*

English proficiency. In this way, the less advanced students are encouraged to participate in task-based interaction, and it becomes easier for me to manage the classroom order.

Teacher 5 seemed to imply that TBLT was helpful for engaging more students in language learning compared to traditional PPP methods. In traditional pedagogy, teachers lecture alone for most of the time and cannot continually check the learning outcomes of their students. Hence, some students with low motivation levels were neglected. In comparison, these students were encouraged by task-based instruction and driven by group members to finish the whole task, just as Teacher 1 mentioned previously.

Teacher 5: … Because of limited time and large class sizes, it is difficult to notice all the learners, especially those who always keep silent in English lessons. In my teaching experience with traditional PPP methods, I cannot receive the feedback from all students on whether they have practiced the language elements or not. To be honest, some are neglected in my class. While, pressed by final task performance in each work, all group members are assigned part of a task and motivated to join in the learning process…

Less Fear of Making Mistakes

The third point that TBLT tended to alleviate students' fear of mistakes was noted by 50% of the teachers, which might have been a direct result of the focus-on-meaning principle. Teacher

5 agreed that TBLT was a good method for reducing students' anxiety of making mistakes when speaking English. Moreover, due to the purpose of expressing themselves, this made learners focus more on meaning communication than on grammatical mistakes. In traditional EFL classes in China, the accuracy of language items is usually highly emphasised, with the teacher (and students) paying close attention to fault-finding when practicing English.

Teacher 5: … To my surprise, students are encouraged to express themselves creatively in task performance. They did make some mistakes in using new words or new structures in order to report a task. But the little mistakes can neither affect the listeners' understanding, nor do I care about them… They have already made great progress, once they open their mouth to talk in English…

Teacher 6 (a senior teacher) noted that the assessment method in TBLT was good for alleviating students' fears of making mistakes. In addition, he mentioned that reducing worry about making mistakes was helpful for developing student autonomy, as they were more willing to find ways of obtaining English knowledge on their own.

> *Teacher 6: …TBLT aiming at achieving a clearly defined outcome provides another way of assessing students' oral product. More attention is paid to expression of meaning instead of correct use of some structures. Students in this condition feel freer to communicate naturally. One interesting thing I have found is that less worry about*

mistakes may promote them to consult dictionaries automatically and find out more possibilities to describe one thing in different ways…

Teacher 7 noted that task-based interaction reduced the fear of making mistakes when speaking when compared with traditional teaching methods. Teacher 7's focus changed to communicating meaning in task-based classes rather than the accuracy of language forms.

Teacher 7: …In English lessons applying the traditional PPP method, I usually correct students when they make some mistakes in terms of pronunciation, word use or grammar rules. So, some students fear to stand up to speak English or answer my questions. I am an evaluator under the traditional teaching method. However, in task-based lessons, meaning exchange is the most important. If learners can express themselves clearly and others can understand them, that is ok. Interestingly, students become more courageous in task-based interaction and speak more.

Similar to Teacher 7, Teacher 8 pointed out the advantage of TBLT in reducing the fear of making mistakes by comparing the situation with traditional teaching methods. In Teacher 8's experience, a relaxed atmosphere in task-based interactions is helpful in encouraging students to use English.

Teacher 8: …Most students look nervous when asked to speak out a sentence in class.

Maybe they are not very confident in the accuracy of the words or phrases used in the sentence. So, the classroom atmosphere in my class is always stressful when employing traditional teaching methods. In task-based interaction, according to my observations, students are trying to express themselves by using what they know with group members. They feel more relaxed when speaking out sentences. Although there exist some problems, if it does not influence the meaning expression, I will not care.

In conclusion, the interview data indicated that there were three main advantages associated with the use of TBLT in China's examination-oriented culture. Almost all the teachers thought that TBLT made EFL classes more interesting and stimulated learners' motivation in learning English, resulting in more students being active in task-based interactions. Furthermore, TBLT was helpful in engaging more students in EFL learning, and 50% of teachers perceived that the nature of focus-on-meaning in TBLT helped to reduce fear of mistakes during communication.

4.5.1.2 Understanding the Obstacles to Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in China

Almost all teacher participants recognised the advantages of adopting TBLT in China's EFL education system. However, they also admitted to experiencing some challenges when promoting communicative TBLT in China. In this section, the focus is on two obstacles that impeded teachers in China when conducting task-based instruction in EFL teaching classrooms: conflicts between traditional Chinese culture in education and TBLT, and difficulties in implementing TBLT in large classes.

Conflict between Traditional Chinese Culture in Education and Task-Based Language Teaching

The current education model in China is profoundly affected by traditional Chinese culture that centres on examinations. Moreover, teachers and students are accustomed to teacher-centred classrooms that emphasise knowledge transmission and examination results are highly valued by instructors, learners, and parents. In this study, seven of the teachers mentioned the negative effect of traditional situations on TBLT implementation in China.

Teacher 3 noted conflicts between teacher evaluations and TBLT, as the examination content could not be reflected fully in task-based instruction. This could be a demotivation that restrains teachers from conducting TBLT in their classrooms.

> Teacher 3*: ... Actually, my teaching outcome is determined by students' examination results to a large extent. So, I have to pay more attention to exam content that is based on accuracy of language items. Much emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure can sometimes conflict with the TBLT approach…*

Teacher 2 also held a negative attitude toward adopting TBLT in China's education context and thought it was difficult to conform with parents' expectations. Influenced by China's traditional Confucius culture, parents only tend to look at numbers and enrolment rates, which hindered

the implementation of communicative TBLT in the classroom.

> *Teacher 2: … As long as I observe their (western TBLT) courses, I can also completely change my class into task-based……but the parents will not agree with that. They like the quantitative numbers and determine whether their children improved or not by checking the final scores. Our junior high school education aims at getting good marks in senior high school entrance examination. In order to perform well in the test, we have to repeat knowledge elements over and over again…*

Teacher 6 referred to another drawback caused by China's education tradition. Influenced by long-standing Confucius culture, students were accustomed to a 'passive' teaching approaches, rendering it hard for them to adapt to the more flexible classrooms under task-based approach.

> *Teacher 6: … Some learners complained to me after the TBLT class that they cannot adapt to a student-centered situation, and they are at a loss when asked to discuss, resulting in a waste of time. 'I feel comfortable and safe when you give me a sample sentence and asked us to recite it.'…*

Teacher 7 figured out the problem of time allocation for task preparation influenced by China's examination-oriented culture. A lot of time is reserved for doing exercises to guarantee that students master the language forms accurately, as required by the English tests. Learners do

not have enough time to prepare for the task in or after class.

> *Teacher 7: … In order to get higher marks in final examinations, students have to spend a lot of time doing exercises to consolidate the language rules. Therefore, most after-school time is occupied by drilling exercises, without time or energy left for task preparation. Furthermore, as you know, it is impossible to reserve more time in class for students to prepare for a task. So, that is the obstacle which stops the implementation of TBLT in my class. Drilling takes more time for examination purposes.*

Difficulty in Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in Large Class Sizes

These teachers were unified in suggesting that large class size was a significant problem when implementing TBLT in the classroom, as more time and energy were required when conducting the lesson. Teacher 7, who had 6 years' teaching experience, highlighted a common obstacle resulting from large class sizes in TBLT implementation: classroom order management. Another teacher (Teacher 5) noted that she usually took advantage of group work and maintained classroom order with the help of group leaders.

> *Teacher 7: … From my point of view, I'm willing to use a task-based instruction. Although there are more than 50 students in my class. When it is their time to talk freely, some students take that freedom a little too far. It becomes difficult to keep order in class. I am*

trying to improve my own abilities in classroom management, but now it is a big problem for me to conduct TBLT…

Teacher 5 also thought that large class sizes result in insufficient time for task-based instruction design. Moreover, given the students' variations in language proficiency, large class sizes rendered it a challenge to address all student needs and the various situations. Unfortunately, large class sizes in middle schools are an undeniable context in China.

Teacher 5: …As a young teacher with limited knowledge of TBLT, I need to put more effort in task-based instruction design. While, with 53 students in my class, I have to spend more time in homework correcting, leading to that time for preparing task material is not enough. Also, I need to consider each students' capacity for finishing a task, which virtually increases workload. The problems resulted from big class size perplex me a lot…

Teacher 8 pointed out that task difficulty level was hard to control in a large class, which may influence the effectiveness of task-based instruction on learning outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to provide direction in task design to assist EFL teachers in the localised form of TBLT explored in the current study.

Teacher 8: …Although the class capacity in middle schools of China has been shrinking year by year, the number of students in my class is still high. There are 54 students in my

class. Limited by my ability, it is difficult for me to design a task that is suitable for all students. After the task-based instruction last week, some students told me that it was too difficult for them to communicate with partners. In an open lecture last year, a top student thought it was too easy for her to learn new things.

In summation, the interview data analysis revealed two main obstacles to implementing TBLT in China's examination-oriented context: the conflict between traditional Chinese culture in education and TBLT and the difficulty in implementing TBLT in large classes. In addition to these problems, some other issues were reported by the interviewees. These included having only a superficial understanding of TBLT (Teacher 5) and a lack of concrete directions for conducting task-based lessons (Teacher 2). All these problems can create difficulties when implementing TBLT in China's middle school classrooms.

4.5.2 English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Actual Practice of Task-Based Language Teaching in China

In the previous section, the advantages of and obstacles to implementing TBLT in China's examination-oriented context from a teacher's perspective were revealed. According to the data collected in the case study, the following section focuses on analysing when and to what extent the Chinese EFL teachers use TBLT.

4.5.2.1 Adoption of Task-Based Language Teaching in Teaching Skills Contests or Open Lectures

As a newly introduced pedagogy in China, TBLT is still not well accepted or used very often by middle school teachers in daily teaching because of the previously mentioned subjective and objective obstacles during implementation. Although the case study data revealed that teachers frequently adopted TBLT in teaching skills contests or open lectures, this rarely happened in regular teaching.

Teacher 2 mentioned applying TBLT in a teaching skills contest, in which TBLT was highly recommended by the evaluators according to the NECS. Traditional teaching methods that emphasise grammar are now considered out-of-date in teaching performance competitions. However, Teacher 2 rarely adopted task-based teaching during regular teaching.

> *Teacher 2: ... I often try using TBLT in teaching skills contest. Evaluators will rank teachers' performance according to some principles advocated in TBLT, for example, whether the class is student-centered or not; whether the students are encouraged to communicate in groups; whether the whole class is centered on one topic (task) and whether language elements are taught inductively and naturally, etc. Hence, as required by the NECS and evaluation standards, TBLT is the best choice to win a contest. In daily teaching, I usually conduct traditional teaching methods, emphasising language forms. Generally speaking, TBLT is conducted two weeks for one time in my class…*

Similar to Teacher 2, Teacher 5 seldom used the task-based instruction method in regular teaching because of the heavy workload for the teacher and examination pressure. Teaching language elements occupied most of the time in her classroom to cater to the tests. Teacher 5 was willing to implement TBLT in open lectures to supplement the traditional form-focused teaching method.

> *Teacher 5: ...For me, as an EFL teacher, I am willing to apply the task-based instruction method in my class. But the most important issue is how to balance the time allocation of traditional grammar teaching and task-based instruction. Impressed by the examinations, I tend to spend more time focusing on the accuracy of language forms and regard task-based instruction as a supplement. Moreover, it usually takes me much time to prepare for a lesson based on tasks, which invisibly increased my workload. So, I seldom use it in daily teaching and prefer to practice it in open lectures. During the biweekly open lessons, the task-based instruction method will be applied to activate the classroom atmosphere and practice students' language use skills, required by the NECS.*

Teacher 5 provided an example of her task-based instruction design in an open lecture:

A total of 53 students in grade seven were included in Teacher 5's class. The unit topic, according to the PEP (People's Education Press) textbook, was 'How much are the socks?' She designed the task as 'working in groups to go to the shopping mall and buying some clothes for yourself in English'. The buying process was recorded by the mobile video recorder in each

group. It was recommended that the task was conducted during the weekend. Students were to discuss the task and decide how to report on it in class. On Monday, students were asked to bring their purchases to school and discuss the prices with group members. Then, two groups were chosen to simulate the purchase situation in front of class. To motivate more students in the task-based interaction, two evaluators from another two groups were selected to assess the previous task performance in terms of content and language items used by the reporters. Teacher 5 said that all students were encouraged to speak in the sentence structure 'How much is/are…', and happily mastered some new clothing-related English words. After the class presentation, the learners were advised to tell their family members about the price of their new clothes. All of them expected to participate biweekly in similar tasks.

Teacher 7 said she often employed TBLT in public lectures once a week and then consolidated vocabulary or grammar knowledge by using traditional methods in daily teaching.

> *Teacher 7: … I often carry out TBLT in a public lecture with a lot of colleagues (including the headmaster) sitting at the back of the classroom. Our school advocates returning the classroom to students. I notice that the TBLT lesson indeed is lively, and students are happy to take it. Yet, the learning effect is unsatisfactory. What learners obtained in such a course isn't systematic and is often full of mistakes. So, after the public lecture and in other classes, I will use traditional methods to strengthen basic knowledge of English… In my schedule, TBLT is conducted once a week…*

Teacher 4 held the view that the premise of communication in a task-based language teaching class was to correctly master the language forms. He typically provided a TBLT lesson weekly or biweekly, when students had a strong knowledge of the grammar rules or in teaching skills contests.

> *Teacher 4: ...TBLT is recommended by experts in EFL education in China. Admittedly, the communicative method has its advantages in improving learning outcomes. So, TBLT is a good orientation for designing a lesson for a teaching skills contest. However, the reality is that most middle school students in China do not have a good enough English proficiency to communicate in EFL learning. For me, the first and most important thing is to help students master the basic linguistic forms accurately. So, I choose to reduce the frequency of applying task-based instruction method to eight times in a semester, approximately one time in a week or in two weeks.*

Although the participants clearly perceived the advantages of conducting TBLT, the majority would only use TBLT infrequently, specifically for teaching skills contests and public lectures for showcasing their teaching performance. They rarely use TBLT in regular classroom teaching due to several constraints mentioned previously, such as the conflict between traditional Chinese culture and TBLT and the difficulties encountered when implementing TBLT in large classes.

4.5.2.2 Limiting Task-Based Language Teaching Implementation Time to 15 Minutes in Regular Teaching Classes

Group work and cooperative learning were highly recommended by Teacher 1, Teacher 8 and Teacher 4, who often conducted short tasks in daily teaching. One feature of their implementation of TBLT was spending <15 min to finish the task and reserving more time for traditional instruction. This was their approach to localising TBLT in examination-oriented contexts.

> *Teacher 1: ...I try to design a mini task and let students perform it in regular classes. Whilst the task-based interaction time is limited into 15 minutes, followed by traditional transmission method emphasising accuracy of language forms. Although the implementation time is limited to 15 minutes, it can stimulate learners to spend more than one hour searching for related information or practicing linguistic elements with group members after class.*

> *Teacher 8: ...If necessary, I often design mini tasks for students to share information and exchange ideas in class. The themes of the mini tasks relate to the content of the textbook or to the writing topics in final examinations. For example, if we are learning food expressions in English, I will ask them to collect information about what their parents' favourite food is before class. Then, in class, students shall communicate with each other and exchange information about foods. If the unit topic is travelling, students will be*

required to search the information about tourist attractions online for task-based interactions. Usually, implementation of the mini tasks will be limited to 15 minutes.

Teacher 4's implementation of tasks in Regular teaching

Ahead of schedule, he provided the students with an article containing the latest English news in China and set three related questions: information gap resolution, problem-solving, and understanding. After school, students thought about the questions and collected information on their own. Before the next TBLT class, they would exchange information and discuss with other group members how to report the task in front of the students. When back in the classroom, the students would quickly review the article, and a representative from each group would present relevant ideas, limited to 15 min. Finally, Teacher 4 provided feedback and comments pertaining to the students' performance in terms of content and language points. Generally, Teacher 4 only managed to conduct a relatively short implementation of TBLT during class time, after which the class returned to traditional PPP procedures. This would involve the teacher presenting language items, students practicing these items under the control of the teacher and producing foreign language learning (e.g., exercise drilling). In traditional PPP teaching, Teacher 4 would start by presenting new words and grammatical rules in the sample sentences included in the textbook. Then, he would make the learners practice and repeat the language items until they could recite them correctly. Ultimately, Teacher 4 would provide different types of exercises (such as filling in blanks, translation, and multiple choice) to check whether these EFL learners had mastered the target language items.

In this study, localised TBLT is defined as an EFL pedagogy that combines TBLT and certain aspects of traditional instruction methods (such as PPP) in Mainland China's examination-oriented education context. Willis (1996) regards a task as a goal-oriented activity where students use the foreign language to reach a real goal. Willis' TBLT aims at using language to exchange information to achieve a real outcome (Willis, 1996), and his task types include solving problems, completing puzzles, playing games, or sharing and comparing experiences (Willis, 1996). Most of the Chinese teacher participants involved in this case study conducted a localised TBLT with the purposes of improving students' language use skills and achieving high marks in final exams. Due to limited class time and to reserve more time for traditional grammar teaching, Teacher 4 (similar to most of the participants) usually divided the whole task implementation process into small parts and only assigned 15 min for in-class task-based interactions. The task designed by Teacher 4 had a starting point (newspaper information) and an outcome (addressed information gap or solved problem). Therefore, these tasks align with the definition of a task presented by Willis (1996). Teacher 4 posited that tasks focused on meaning expression and idea exchange were helpful for cultivating students' autonomy of learning English in daily life. More importantly, the students started to find English useful and closely related to real life, which triggered further motivation to study English.

In summary, the teachers in this case study either rarely adopted TBLT in regular teaching (mainly in teaching skills competitions or open lectures) or within a limited amount of class time during regular teaching (e.g., Teacher 4). Driven by the requirements of the NECS and the

advantages of TBLT, some EFL teachers in China have tried to adopt task-based approaches to win teaching competitions or impress audiences with good teaching performances in open lectures. One common feature when adopting TBLT was targeting language items that would be included in examinations when designing tasks. Only a small proportion of teachers applied TBLT in regular classes. However, this was still within a limited amount of time to reserve more time for conducting traditional instruction (PPP). These tasks took various forms, including information gap resolution, problem solving, understanding, information exchange, and experience sharing.

4.5.3 Informants' Suggestions on Localising TBLT in China

Teachers in China have their own distinct understandings and methods for implementing TBLT. In the qualitative information analysed previously, we discovered teachers' perceptions of the advantages and obstacles of TBLT as well as their actual practice in examination-oriented education contexts. By combining the instructors' understanding of TBLT and their related experiences (classroom observations and instruction design analysis), the participants made some suggestions about localising TBLT in China's culture of learning.

4.5.3.1 Connecting Task-Based Language Teaching with Language Items for Examinations

In the case study, we asked teachers to provide suggestions for conducting TBLT in China. Six of the teachers provided the common answer of targeting task-based instruction topics toward the final (high school entrance) examinations. This direction would help teachers to implement

TBLT within the scope of the syllabus, making task-based instruction more systematic and easier for students to perform tasks. This is because the language elements in the syllabus can provide scaffolding for task production. Moreover, language elements in textbooks are also sources of exam content.

While Teacher 5 designed tasks by including essential language items to be included in tests, Teacher 7 designed tasks that would help students revise language items based on some existing interactive and communicative activities in the textbook. They believed that doing so could help students prepare more effectively for examinations and improve their language-use abilities through TBLT.

> *Teacher 5: …Examinations are dominant in China, which determine students' future lives and teachers evaluation results. Thus, all the teaching activities in my classroom should be focused on examination content. In addition, I hope to improve students' language-use abilities required by the NECS through using communicative teaching methods, such as TBLT. So, after finishing a unit, I will design a task based on the topic of that unit, which is included in the PEP textbook. The language forms used to conduct the task are the new words and sentence structures learned in the textbook, which are in the range of English tests. In this way, students can easily master the input knowledge to scaffold the task performance and consolidate the language forms again by performing a task.*

Teacher 7: ...In the PEP textbook, there are some communicative activities, such as 'Ask your classmates about the food in the chart. Find out what they like and don't like' and 'Find out your group members' birthdays and ages. Line up from the youngest to the oldest'. In order to reduce the task preparation time and target the tasks at examination content, I usually revise the communicative activities included in the textbook as tasks and conduct a task-based instruction approach to practice the language items learned in that unit.

4.5.3.2 Reducing Task-Based Interaction Time in the Classroom

Significant differences exist between students' levels of language proficiency, and some students are very poor at English. Therefore, teachers tend to use traditional teaching methods to consolidate basic grammar knowledge. Moreover, testing for language elements constitutes a large part of examinations. Teacher 4 tried to compress TBLT time in class as much as possible so as not to affect traditional teaching processes. Teacher 8 also mentioned that task-based interaction time spent in his class is limited to 15 minutes. Most work or discussions are finished after class'. Teacher 5 usually arranged whole-class time to conduct TBLT, although the frequency was low (once a week or two weeks for one time).

Teacher 4: ...In my class, students are more familiar with the traditional teaching process. Before a lesson, they usually preview the learning content according to the traditional teaching method: present the new linguistic elements, practice the language rules by

making sample sentences and do some exercises to check whether they have mastered the grammar rules correctly. Therefore, in class, the traditional teaching procedure often goes smoothly. So, in weekly TBLT class, I try to reduce the task-based interaction time and let students embrace the familiar traditional process more, to reduce the sense of strangeness and exclusion.

Teacher 8: ...Totally, there are 50 minutes in one class; I don't want to spend too much time on task-based interaction. Usually, the procedures of preparation (for a task) and rehearsal (of task performance) are arranged during after-school time. Students can work in groups to finish the task. In class, only 10–15 minutes are reserved for task-based interaction. I will choose one or two groups to perform the task in front of the class and select another two groups to comment on their performance. If necessary, a debate will be arranged.

Teacher 5: ... As illustrated before, I prefer to take a whole class to conduct a TBLT lesson. Students are free to discuss the topic in a more relaxed environment. By using English to do things in real life (such as buying clothes in a shopping mall), EFL learners in my class begin to realise the practical function of learning a foreign language in school. But the frequency of applying TBLT is low. Usually, I choose to conduct a TBLT lesson once a week or once every two weeks.

It is prudent to stress that behind the various TBLT implementation designs, one common feature is present: all teachers consciously save class time to conduct TBLT. Accordingly, they tend to reduce the frequency of task-based approaches or limit TBLT time in each lesson.

4.5.3.3 Localised Task-Based Language Teaching: Incorporating Traditional Methods in Task-Based Language Teaching

In Asia, students are accustomed to 'passive' learning styles and teacher-centred classrooms. Accordingly, a strong version of TBLT can cause confrontation (Justin Harris, 2018). As this situation is also applicable to China, some teachers in the current study suggested incorporating traditional PPP methods when implementing TBLT.

Incorporating Presentation and Practice into Pre-tasks in TBLT

In Teacher 5's pre-task, she initially presented some new words and sample sentences that asked about prices. The students then worked in pairs to practice the structures. Teacher 5 took advantage of PPP, helping students acquire language items efficiently to lay a solid foundation for the task cycle. Teacher 1 also agreed that incorporating the presentation and practice elements of PPP within the pre-task stage would help students master linguistic elements and prepare them for task-based communication in the target language.

Teacher 5: ...In my opinion, in the first stage (pre-task), new words and sentence

structures should be presented first to scaffold the task performance. So, I usually present and explain the language forms on the blackboard in a traditional way.

Teacher 1: ... As far as I am concerned, the primary objective of a lesson is to help students master linguistic elements correctly, influenced by the examination culture in China. Similar to the traditional PPP method, I will present the language forms first and ask students to practice them in order to prepare for a task. I think the process benefits task performance, specifically for grade seven students.

Incorporating Presentation and Practice into Post-tasks in TBLT

Teacher 7 advised applying the presentation and practice elements of PPP to the language focus stage after the task cycle. In her instruction design, she selected content and language knowledge after the students' performance, specifically highlighting any grammatical mistakes. Moreover, she presented linguistic items systematically and provided some related drill exercises for practice. This method of incorporating presentation and practice helped students construct (or perfect) a general systematic knowledge of English.

The classroom teaching in Teacher 7's pre-task phase (or Teacher 5's language focus step) was teacher-centred and form-focused. In this way, students could learn basic language knowledge elements in traditional PPP steps and then improve their language use skills in the meaning-

focused phases of TBLT. The ability to master English rules and language use skills are both requirements for achieving high marks in examinations. Hence, the incorporation process can adapt TBLT more effectively to the Chinese examination-oriented conditions in addition to catering to Confucius culture.

In conclusion, through data analysis of the interviews and classroom observations, the informants' suggestions for localising TBLT in China centred on three aspects. First, topics of TBLT should be connected with language items for examinations to save task preparation time and reduce task difficulty levels. Second, reduce task-based interaction time in class to reserve more time for traditional teaching. Third, incorporate traditional PPP phases into localised TBLT designs to meet examination requirements.

4.5.4 Summary of Case Study Results

The results of the case study shall be summarised to facilitate a clear answer to RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions, practices, and suggestions related to TBLT in China's examination-oriented context. The data analysis indicated that EFL teachers in China have their own understanding of TBLT in terms of advantages and obstacles, and most are trying to adapt TBLT in their own way. Importantly, they also offered some suggestions about localising TBLT in examination-oriented contexts based on their own teaching experiences.

According to the interview data analysis, there were three main advantages to implementing TBLT in EFL classes in China. Almost all the informants mentioned that task-based interactions were beneficial in motivating students in EFL learning. Learners displayed more interest in the fun tasks, especially compared to the grammar rules employed in traditional instruction. Hence, TBLT tends to engage more students in task-based interactions. In addition, TBLT was helpful in promoting cooperative work between students. Furthermore, because of the principle of 'focus-on-meaning', students and teachers were more tolerant of mistakes, alleviating students' fears of making mistakes during EFL learning.

The results also highlighted the conflict between traditional Chinese culture in education and classic TBLT. Examinations play a dominant role in China's education system, resulting in teachers, students, and parents having significant concerns about exam scores. Currently, not all exam content can be covered in classic TBLT, which presents a barrier to EFL teachers in China trying to conduct TBLT in regular classes. Furthermore, influenced by the Chinese culture of learning, students have become accustomed to passive teacher-centred learning methods, making it difficult for them to adapt to the more flexible classrooms in TBLT. In addition, the case study results revealed that large class sizes are a significant problem that could hinder the implementation of TBLT. Large class sizes mean more time and energy is required when teaching, especially in interactive TBLT lessons.

Although the existing obstacles could have demotivated EFL teachers from fully implementing

the classic TBLT in the Chinese context, some teachers were willing to try and integrate a form of localised TBLT in their classroom teaching to benefit from its advantages. They usually designed task-based instruction for teaching performance competitions or open lectures. Some teachers implemented a small part of the TBLT procedures in class time and conducted the task preparation step before or after class. Therefore, we conclude that teachers in China either rarely adopt TBLT in their regular teaching or adopt TBLT only for a much shorter duration compared to classic TBLT. The teacher participants also suggested connecting topics within TBLT with language items for examination preparation and reducing task-based interaction time in the classroom. They further suggested incorporating traditional PPP methods into localised TBLT designs to help students master language elements accurately and succeed in examinations.

Taking the informants' successful experiences and suggestions into consideration, we applied Willis' TBLT steps to design a localised TBLT instruction for the experimental group in the intervention study. Before this was implemented, a pilot study was conducted to verify whether the newly designed localised TBLT form was appropriate for formal intervention studies, which will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Piloting Localised Task-Based Language Teaching and Traditional Presentation, Practice, and Production Instruction Designs

From analysing the case study results in the previous chapter, we revealed some evidence and suggestions related to localising TBLT in China, including targeting tasks to language items for examination purposes, reducing task-based interaction time in class and incorporating traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) methods into localised task-based language teaching (TBLT) designs. These suggestions were gleaned from the teacher participants' TBLT implementation in an examination-oriented context. This chapter presents a pilot of localised TBLT instruction design, which was achieved by combining the principles mentioned by participants, classic TBLT theory, and traditional PPP teaching methods. A traditional instruction design applying PPP principles was also piloted, to ensure the intervention study run successfully.

5.1 Pilot Instruction Design Adopting Suggestions of Chinese English Teachers in Conducting Localised Task-Based Language Teaching

This section elaborates on the Chinese EFL teachers' suggestions for localising TBLT in the examination-oriented context obtained from the case study. Then, a localised TBLT instruction design was created by adopting these suggestions and Willis' classic TBLT framework for the pilot study. Finally, the results and reflections of the pilot are displayed to illuminate the formal

intervention study.

5.1.1. Suggestions of Chinese English Teachers Regarding How to Localise Task-Based Language Teaching

Before the formal intervention study started, a pilot study was conducted to test the availability of localised TBLT designs created by combining the principles of localising TBLT with the theory of classic TBLT. In the case study, we found that teachers in China either used TBLT less frequently or for shorter durations compared to classic TBLT. Although TBLT is recommended by NECS (2001; 2011) for improving students' language use skills, it is still not well accepted or often used in regular teaching by middle school teachers because of the previously mentioned subjective and objective obstacles to implementation (e.g., the conflict between traditional Chinese culture in education and classic TBLT; the difficulty in conducting TBLT in large class sizes). The most time is allotted to traditional instruction, emphasizing the accuracy of language forms, such as new words, grammar rules and sentence structures. Therefore, EFL teachers in China adopt TBLT only during teaching skill contests or open lectures.

Moreover, to lower the task difficulty levels, save task preparation time and engage more students in task-based interaction, the informants suggested targeting tasks to language items for examination purposes. Teachers 5 and 7 believed that doing so could help students more

effectively prepare for examinations and improve their language-use abilities through TBLT. Another suggestion from the subjects was to reduce task-based interaction time in the classroom and reserve more time for form-focused teaching, the purpose of which was also to prepare for examinations. In addition, they mentioned the necessity of incorporating traditional PPP methods into localised TBLT designs to help students master language elements accurately and succeed in examinations. For example, PPP presentations and practices were incorporated into pre-tasks in the localised TBLT form to help students build confidence and scaffold task performance. Presentation and practice were also incorporated into TBLT post-tasks to assist students in constructing a general, systematic knowledge of English language rules. In this way, incorporating traditional PPP steps into the localised TBLT framework contributes to improving the accuracy level of students' oral performance.

5.1.2 Localised Task-Based Language Teaching Instruction Design for the Pilot Study

Willis's (1996) TBLT is more flexible and more operational for EFL teachers in China. The flexible features of Willis' TBLT can be described from three perspectives. First, the framework does not necessarily equate to a 'lesson', which means the pre-task step can be finished in a previous class, or the rehearsing step could be completed after class, as homework. Second, the components of Willis' TBLT framework could be weighted in differently. That is, more emphasis could be placed on the language focus phase in China's examination-oriented context. Third, the flexibility feature of the framework is reflected in the grouping method. According

to Willis (1996), students with varied language proficiencies can work together to perform tasks easily, providing the possibility for conducting group work in Chinese classrooms with large class sizes.

Therefore, we adapted the theory and framework of Willis's TBLT as classic TBLT in the current study. In Willis' TBLT, for the pre-task, the teacher would introduce the task to learners, such as through brainstorming ideas with the class. Accordingly, the learners would understand clearly what objectives they were reaching for and what outcomes could be achieved. The pre-task phase in Willis' TBLT is teacher-centred and meaning-focused. In the task cycle, learners could finish the tasks on their own, with partners, or with group members. Subsequently, they plan how to display their task report prior to its performance. Then, students should perform their tasks in front of the class and receive comments from their classmates and instructor. In the task cycle, the teacher acts as a monitor to manage the classroom order and encourages learners to take part in the task-based interaction. Students are at the centre of the classroom during the task cycle. In the post-task (focus on form), specific language features of the text or report constitute the primary focus (Willis, 1996). Students are encouraged to discover language rules on their own. In addition, Willis (1996) suggested optional follow-ups, such as repeating the same (or similar) oral task with different partners, reflective discussions and note taking. For the localised TBLT instruction design, we adopted the steps in Willis' framework: pre-task, task cycle, and focus on form (post-task). However, the focus and concrete implementation procedures in the pre-task and post-task parts of localised TBLT differed from

classic TBLT. For instance, to cater to English test requirements, the presentation and practice of language items in the PPP method were incorporated into the pre-task and language focus stages, aiming to improve the accuracy level of learning outcomes. Therefore, based on the teacher participants' suggestions on localising TBLT and Willis' framework of TBLT, we designed the localised TBLT instruction for the pilot study (see Table 14) with concrete teaching steps and worksheets (Table 15).

Table 14. The Localised TBLT Instruction Design for the Pilot Study

Topic: Traffic Rules	
Target Students	**Grade 7**
Class Duration	**50 minutes**
Target Language Forms	**If clause**
Lesson Objectives	By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the form of an If clause. 2. Use If clauses to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Be familiar with traffic rules.
Teaching Method	**Localised TBLT**
<u>Lesson Progression:</u> **<u>Stage 1: Pre-task (In-class 15 min)</u>** (for the purpose of scaffolding the task performance) Students are divided into 10 groups, each with 5–6 students. In pre-task preparation, the teacher will provide sample sentences with If clauses and vocabulary that will be presented in the language focus phase. Also, a video clip about traffic rules will be shown by the teacher, who will provide a scenario where this could happen, and then explain how and when this could happen. The teacher's input in this stage aims to scaffold students' subsequent expression and information exchanges. Then, each student should speak out loud and share at least three sentences using the If clause after watching the video clip with group members. They can express ideas from the perspective of the pedestrian, car driver, or cyclist. This is interactive group work.	

Stage 2: Task cycle (In-class 15 min) (for the purpose of improving students' communicative skills and higher-order thinking skills.)

In group discussion, learners exchange information on traffic rules and violations of traffic regulations collected in real world that are expressed with the If clause. Then, three presenters belonging to three groups will be randomly selected to present in front of the class to share their ideas. A student in the next group should comment on the presentation (for example, a student in Group 3 presents, and then a student in Group 4 should give comments on the Group 3 presentation). At the end, the teacher will give feedback on the overall performance. All comments should be illustrated in terms of content, grammar, and vocabulary.

Stage 3: Focus on Form (In-class 20 min) (aiming at helping students to master the language forms correctly.)

The instructor concentrates on language forms in this section, involving new vocabulary and grammatical rules. Meanwhile, the use of these language forms will be further practiced.

After-class follow-up (to consolidate what students learned in class)
In this stage, there are three activities to motivate students: student-design tests, inter-group discussions, and online information collection.
Activity 1 is about student-design tests, where students will be trained to be 'question masters' and learn to be evaluators. The question master (as posited by Willis & Willis (2013)) is a more TBLT-based alternative, which is to ask students to design their own tests on the materials they have just worked with.

In this activity, each student will be asked to design an exercise (including multiple choice, fill-in information, and true or false text types). Then, they exchange exercises with the other group members and finish the exercises received. At the end, the group members will meet together. Each one is the evaluator and provides answers and comments considering the exercises they designed.

Activity 2 is an inter-group discussion. During class break, students will share their group ideas with other groups and try to know more If clause sentences about traffic rules from other perspectives.

Activity 3 is online information collection. When students are at home after class, they will search on the internet for pictures of traffic rules. Any point of view is acceptable. Then, learners will share their work in the 'Class Wechat Group'.

Table 15. Concrete Teaching Steps and Worksheets of Localized TBLT Instruction Design

Stage 1: Pre-task preparation (15 minutes)

Part 1: Sample sentence input [Individual work] (5 minutes)

You are provided with some sample sentences with If clause about traffic rules in the worksheet. Please find out the grammatical structure by yourself.

Worksheet One:

1. If you play on the road, you will be in danger.
2. It will be dangerous if you don't look left and right before crossing the road.
3. If you drive too fast, you may have an accident.
4. If people obey the traffic rules, there will be fewer accidents.
5. You must stop if the traffic light is red.

Grammatical rule: If +_____, subject +_____+ verb.

Subject +_____+ verb +_____+ present tense.

Answer: **If** +present tense, subject +will/must/may/should/shall +verb

Or: Subject +will/must/may/should/shall +verb **if** +present tense

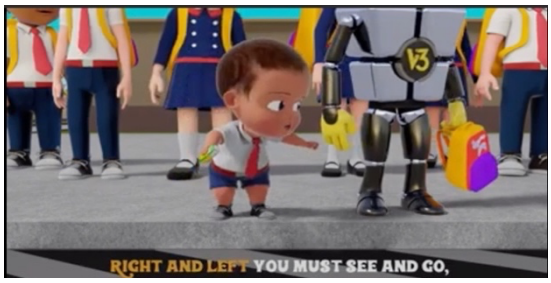
Part 2: Video watching [Group work] (5 minutes)

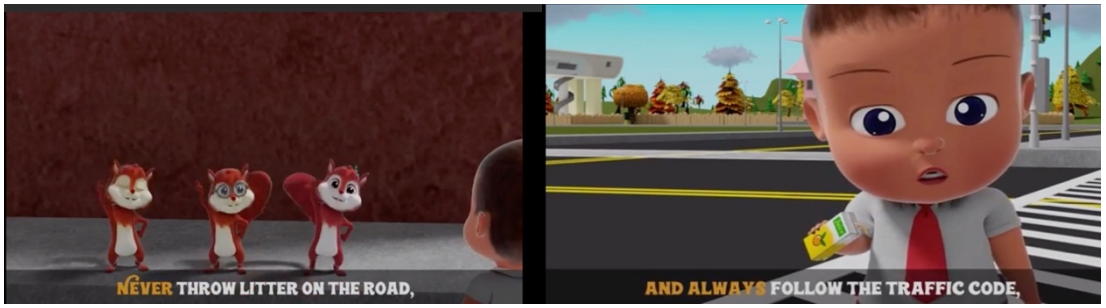
Step 1: Please communicate with your group members to see whether you have the same answer to the above question. Then, the teacher will check your answers.

Step2: Please watch a video clip about traffic rules.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaNhsaBV6pQ

Some pictures with subtitle will be offered for your reference.





Step 3 (5 minutes): After watching the video about traffic rules, please imagine such situations in your real life. On the road with lanes and sidewalks, when you walk, how to protect yourself? When you drive a car, how to guarantee safety? When you ride a bike, how to protect yourself? The following information in Table One will scaffold your discussion.

Table One:

On the road			
How / When	walk	drive a car	Ride on a bike

	1. Walk on sidewalks 2. Don't play 3. Cross the zebra crossing 4. Go when the traffic light is green 5. Look left and right before crossing the road 6. Never throw litter on the road ……	1. Drive slowly 2. Let pedestrians go first 3. Don't make a wrong turn 4. Always follow the traffic code ……	1. Wear helmet 2. Wear light-colored clothes 3. Have lights on the bicycle 4. Don't carry people 5. Ride on sidewalks ….

Please discuss with your group members the traffic rules in this video clip and in your daily life. Speak out at least three sentences by using If clause from pedestrian's, car drivers' and cyclist's point of view (Group 1-4 work from pedestrian's perspective; Group 5-7work from car drivers' perspective; Group 8-10 work from cyclist's perspective) Please conduct the discussion under the following worksheet. An example has been given.

Worksheet Two: [Group work]

From the perspective of	Pedestrian/ car driver/ cyclist (Please circle your angle)
If clause sentences	1. It will be safe, if you cross the zebra crossing when traffic light is green. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Stage 2: Task cycle [Group work] (15 minutes)

Part 1: Please exchange your information on traffic rules again with group members, and try to put more sentences in your Worksheet Two.

Part 2: In your group, please select a spokesman, who may have the chance to share your ideas of traffic rules with If clause in front of class. Also, please prepare yourselves to evaluate others' performance in terms of content, grammar and vocabulary. Worksheet Three will be used to facilitate this part.

Worksheet Three (Please circle the chosen spokesman and evaluator in your course)

Topic	From pedestrian's point of view	From car driver's point of view	From cyclist's point of view
Spokesman	Ss in Group 1,2,3,4	Ss in Group 5,6,7	Ss in Group 8,9,10
Student evaluator	Ss in Group 2,3,4,5	Ss in Group 6,7,8	Ss in Group 9,10,1
Evaluator's comments	1. The content is closely related to traffic rules. 😄 ☹ 2. The content is important for our daily life. 😄 ☹ 3. The sentence structure is correct. 😄 ☹ 4. The vocabulary used is rich enough. 😄 ☹ 5. The pronunciation of words is correct. 😄 ☹ 6. Words used are appropriate. 😄 ☹		
Teacher's feedback			

Stage 3: Language Focus (Presentation and Practice) [Individual work] (20 minutes)

Part 1: The teacher will present new words, new phrases and new sentence pattern If clause to students. The content in this part concerns linguistic element, which is very useful for you to prepare and perform the task.

1. Present new words: rider, careless, helmet, light-colored, wear, trouble, fine
2. Present new phrases: wear helmets, wear light-colored clothes, have lights on the bicycle, break the traffic rules, get a fine, make a wrong turn, cause trouble
3. Present the sentence pattern: If +Subject. +V，Subject.+ will +V

4. Present sample sentences:

①If you break the rules, you will get a fine.

②If you cross the road, you will be in danger.

③If you make a wrong turn, you will cause troubles.

④If you don't drive carefully, you will get hurt.

Part 2: Please practice If clause sentences under teacher's guidance.

A: If you ride too fast, you may have an accident.

B: If you have an accident, you will get hurt.

C: If you get hurt, you won't be able to go to school.

……

Stage 4: After-class homework:

Activity 1: Student-design tests [Group work]

You will be the "question master" in this stage.

Step 1: After class, you should design an exercise in the text type of multiple-choice, fill-in information, or true & false.

Step 2: Then, please exchange your exercise with other group members, and finish the exercise you received.

Step 3: Group members should meet each other and evaluate exercises by the designers.

Step4: You should discuss together, give comments and exchange ideas with your group members.

The following worksheet will help you do this task.

Worksheet Four

Designer	
Tested student	
Exercise	

Evaluation by the designer	😄	😟
Feedback from designer		
Group discussion note		

Activity 2: Inter-group Discussion [Group Work]

During class break, please share your group ideas with other groups and try to put more sentences in Worksheet 2 from the other two perspectives. Inter-group discussion will be arranged according to the following table.

Table Two:

Inter-group Discussion Arrangement		
Ss in Group1, 5, 8	Ss in Group2, 6, 9	Ss in Group3, 4,7, 10

Activity3: Online information collection [Individual Work]

After class, when you are at home, please search on the Internet about pictures of traffic rules. Any point of view is ok. Then, please share your work on "Class Wechat Group".

Tables 14 and 15 present a lesson example using the pilot study's localised TBLT method. This design was suitable for China's examination-oriented context by improving students' EFL oral products and according to examination requirements. The instruction design topic is traffic rules, with a focused task targeting the use of if clauses. Enlightened from the localisation features found in the literature review (Carless, 2007; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Kim et al., 2017) and suggestions from teacher participants in the case study, focused tasks are recommended for the localised TBLT class of China to lower task difficulty levels and engage

more students in task-based interactions. Designing focused tasks is one important aspect of TBLT localisation in examination-oriented contexts.

In the localised TBLT instruction design, task-based interaction time (time for the task cycle) was reduced to 15 min in class by adopting the procedures listed in Willis' theory (task, plan, and report). More time was reserved for focus-on-form learning in the pre- and post-task phases. In addition, the localised TBLT form added an assessment after reporting the task, to help students better understand good performance criteria. Enlightened by the instructors' suggestions in the case study, we targeted the localised task and language items towards examinations. Traffic rules was one topic chosen from the textbook, and the If clause was regarded as an important point in English tests. Moreover, in the pre-task and post-task stages, presentation and practice from the traditional PPP method were incorporated to enhance students' accuracy of vocabulary and sentence structures.

5.1.3 Piloting the Localised Instruction Design and Reflections

The pilot study was conducted in School C with the help of Teacher 8 in August 2020. Teacher 8 is a senior EFL teacher with over 20 years' teaching experience in middle school and was invited to pilot the newly designed localised TBLT lesson. Students in his class (N = 53) had just finished their Grade 7 learning and would start Grade 8 life. The whole teaching process was video-recorded, and short interviews with the learners and Teacher 8 were also conducted.

After the interviews with the students after the pilot lesson, it was clear that most of them agreed that the localised TBLT class was more interesting than previous English lessons because some fun activities and video clips were created and provided during English learning. From Teacher 8's experience, the learners were more active in speaking English in such an interactive class.

In the after-class interview with Teacher 8, he mentioned that most students could not produce correct new sentences in the pre-task, as they were restricted by their English knowledge and the traditional learning and thinking model (note down and recite what was provided by the teacher). A small group of students indicated that it was hard for them to become familiar with the teaching method in the task cycle because they did not know what to do when the teacher gave them time to discuss and interact. Here, Teacher 8 strongly emphasised the necessity of conducting a language focus step in which a teacher presentation (conclusion) of language items and student practice of new sentences were included. According to Teacher 8's statement, the accuracy of exercises conducted by the students during language focus improved after consolidating the English elements.

Based on the pilot study results, we can conclude that the localised TBLT instruction design was successful in real practice, meaning that the localised form was available for the formal intervention study.

5.2 Pilot Instruction Design Adopting Traditional Presentation, Practice, and Production Methods

In the following intervention study, the learners in the control group were subjected to PPP methods in the EFL class. Thus, it was necessary to pilot a traditional teaching method to guarantee the success of the formal intervention. PPP theory, commonly used in Asian areas in EFL teaching was adopted in the traditional instruction design.

5.2.1 Traditional Instruction Design for the Pilot Study

The traditional PPP method is a long-standing approach that is widely and frequently used by Asian EFL teachers (Tang, 2004; Tong, 2005) in middle schools of China, including School C for the pilot study and School B for the intervention study. The traditional method emphasises the accuracy of language forms and grammatical structures, which better caters to the examination requirements (Littlewood, 20007). Influenced by the examination-oriented culture in China, the Chinese EFL teachers and students are familiar with the traditional approach. The next section provides a traditional instruction design for the pilot study (see Table 16 and Table 17).

PPP is a teaching method that follows a sequence: presenting the item, practicing the item and

producing or using the item (Tomlinson, 2011). Three steps are involved in PPP: presentation, practice, and production. First, teachers present new language forms supplemented by conversations or text (Halici Page & Mede, 2018). Second, learners practice language forms through controlled activities. For example, under the guidance of teachers or independently with listening materials, students repeat sentences or dialogue until they can read aloud correctly (Wen, 2017). In the production stage, learners are encouraged to express their opinions in the foreign language more freely and try to creatively combine new language knowledge with previous language items (Criado, 2013). Based on PPP theory, we created the following traditional instruction design for the pilot study (see Table 16) with concrete teaching materials and worksheets (see Table 17).

Table 16. The Traditional PPP Instruction Design for the Pilot Study

Topic: Traffic Rules	
Target Students	**Grade 7**
Class Duration	**50 minutes**
Target Language Forms	**If clause**
Lesson Objectives	By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to: 1. Demonstrate awareness of the form of an If clause. 2. Use if clauses to talk about imaginary situations. 3. Be familiar with traffic rules.
Teaching Method	**Traditional Instruction (PPP)**
<u>Lesson Progression:</u> **<u>Step1: Presentation (20 min)</u>** (aiming at helping students to understand the rules of if clauses) 1. Present new words: rider, careless, helmet, light-coloured, wear, trouble, fine	

2. Present new phrases: wear helmets, wear light-coloured clothes, have lights on the bicycle, break the traffic rules, receive a fine, make a wrong turn, cause trouble
3. Present the sentence pattern: If +Subject. +V，Subject.+ will +V
4. Present sample sentences:
   ①If you break the rules, you will get a fine.
   ②If you cross the road, you will be in danger.
   ③If you make a wrong turn, you will cause trouble.
   ④If you do not drive carefully, you will get hurt.

Step2: Practice (20 min) (in order to help students use if clauses correctly)**:** Practice the If clause by doing group work: playing the 'If Chain Game'.

A: If you ride too fast, you may have an accident.

B: If you have an accident, you will get hurt.

C: If you get hurt, you won't be able to go to school.

……

Step3: Production (10 min) (to check whether learners can use if clauses correctly)**:** Finish exercises in 1b.

Post-class homework (for the purpose of consolidating the if clause structure): Finish off the workbook exercises.

Table 17. Concrete Teaching Steps and Worksheets of Localized TBLT Instruction Design

Stage 1: Presentation (20 minutes)

Part 1: Presentation of new words, new phrases, target sentence pattern, and sample sentences

[Individual work] (10 minutes)

You are provided with the new words, phrases and the sentence pattern of If clause. Please look through the items and read after me.

Worksheet One:

1. Present new words: rider, careless, helmet, light-colored, wear, trouble, fine
2. Present new phrases: wear helmets, wear light-colored clothes, have lights on the bicycle, break the traffic rules, get a fine, make a wrong turn, cause trouble

3. Present the sentence pattern:

Grammatical rule: If +_____, subject +_____+ verb.

Subject +_____+ verb +_____+ present tense.

Sentence structure: **If** +present tense, subject +will/must/may/should/shall +verb

Or: Subject +will/must/may/should/shall +verb **if** +present tense

Part 2: Presentation of sample sentences applying If clause. [Individual work] (10 minutes)

Then, some sample sentences are presented by using the If clause pattern in Worksheet Two. Please take notes and try to recite the sentence structures.

Worksheet Two:

Present sample sentences:

①If you break the rules, you will get a fine.

②If you cross the road, you will be in danger.

③If you make a wrong turn, you will cause troubles.

④If you don't drive carefully, you will get hurt.

Stage 2: Practice (20 minutes)

Part 1: Please review the new words, phrases, and sample sentences in Worksheets One and Two. Read them aloud till you can recite them. **[Individual work] (5 minutes)**

Part 2: Please watch a video clip about traffic rules. **[Individual work] (5 minutes)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaNhsaBV6pQ

Part 3: After watching the video about traffic rules, please write down more sentences in Worksheet Three with If clause with the help of the information in Table One. On the road with lanes and

sidewalks, when you walk, how to protect yourself? When you drive a car, how to guarantee safety? When you ride a bike, how to protect yourself? Then, please check the accuracy of your sentences with your partner. **[Pair work] (5 minute)**

Table One:

On the road			
How \ When	walk	drive a car	Ride on a bike
	1. Walk on sidewalks 2. Don't play 3. Cross the zebra crossing 4. Go when the traffic light is green 5. Look left and right before crossing the road 6. Never throw litter on the road ……	1. Drive slowly 2. Let pedestrians go first 3. Don't make a wrong turn 4. Always follow the traffic code ……	1. Wear helmet 2. Wear light-colored clothes 3. Have lights on the bicycle 4. Don't carry people 5. Ride on sidewalks ….

Worksheet Two: [Pair work]

From the perspective of	Pedestrian/ car driver/ cyclist (Please circle your angle)
If clause sentences	1. It will be safe, if you cross the zebra crossing when traffic light is green. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Part 4: Play the 'If Chain Game' to speak out as many sentences as possible to practice the phrases

and If clause sentences you write in Step 3 **[Group work] (5 minutes)**.

A: If you ride too fast, you may have an accident.

B: If you have an accident, you will get hurt.

C: If you get hurt, you won't be able to go to school.

……

A: If you walk on the road, you should cross the zebra crossing.

B: If you walk on the road, please don't play.

C: If you walk on the road, you can go when the traffic light is green.

……

A: It will be safe, if you drive a car slowly on the road.

B: It will be dangerous, if you make a wrong turn.

C: If you make a wrong turn, you may get a fine.

……

Stage 3: Production (15 minutes)

Please finish the exercises in Worksheet Four. Then we will check it together.

Worksheet Four:

I. Multiple choices:

1. If you____to the party, you'll have a great time.

   A. will go B. went C. go D. going

2. –What are you going to do tomorrow?

   --We'll go to the library tomorrow if it____.

   A. isn't rain B. rain C. won't rain D. doesn't rain

3. What will you do if you ____to the old folk's home visit?

   A. go B. went C. going D. will go

4. I____her the answer if she____me.

   A. can tell, will ask B. will tell, will ask C. would tell, ask D. will tell, asks

5. -- Do you know when he will come back tomorrow?

   ---Sorry, I don't know. When he___back, I'll tell you.

A. comes B. will come C. come D. may come

II. Please underline the correct answer.

1. Daina (will go/go/goes) to Europe if she (will pass/pass/passes) the exams .

2. The graduates (will teach/teach/teaches) in the poor village if the Ministry of Education (will agree/ agree/agrees) soon.

3. If there (will be/ are/is) a car accident, they (will call/call/calls) 110 for help at once.

4. If it (won't/don't/doesn't/ isn't) rainy, we (will take/ take/takes) walk outside.

5. If a UFO (will land/land/lands) in front of me, I (will go/go/goes) in to look for the alien.

6. If he (will have/have/has) money, he (will bulid/build/builds) a science lab.

7.Don't wait for me if I (am/ will be) late.

8.They (won't/don't) go to the beach if it (will rain/rain /rains).

After class homework:

Activity 1 [Individual work]:

Step 1: Review the new words, and sample sentences learned in this lesson. Try your best to recite them.

Step 2: Finish the exercises on pp. 43-49 of the workbook, which will help you to check whether you have mastered the language forms correctly.

Activity 2 [Pair work]: Share your notes with your partners in order to add some useful content and address the language problems.

Activity 3[Individual work]: Please correct the mistakes you made in the production stage, and reflect on the rules of If clause on your own. If necessary, please ask for help from your classmates or your English teacher.

The traditional PPP form focuses on vocabulary accuracy and sentence structure. The teacher was central to the teaching and controlled the whole process, from presentation to the production of language items. Students are focused on the accuracy of language forms and receive knowledge passively. Drill exercises designed for the production and after-class follow-up parts reflected the examination-oriented culture in China because a higher accuracy rate in exercises results in higher test scores.

5.2.2 Piloting Traditional Instruction Design and Reflections

The pilot study for the traditional PPP method was also conducted in School C with the help of Teacher 8 in August 2020. Here, 54 students in one of Teacher 8's other classes took part in piloting the instruction design to guarantee reliability, which could be influenced by students' familiarity with the learning content. There were similarities with the other class, including proficiency and learning motivation. The whole teaching process was video-recorded, and short interviews with the learners and Teacher 8 were conducted after the pilot teaching.

Since both Teacher 8 and his students are accustomed to and familiar with traditional teaching methods, piloting the traditional instruction design progressed smoothly from beginning to end. It was apparent from the data collected in the video recordings that the EFL learners focused on mastering grammatical rules and sentence structures provided by the teacher. They also spent more time repeating language items. After piloting the traditional instruction design,

Teacher 8 confirmed that the teaching procedures in traditional PPP methods were suitable and practical for inclusion in the intervention study.

In conclusion, both the localised TBLT form (designed based on case study results) and the traditional PPP instruction procedures proved feasible for the intervention after the pilot study. In the following intervention period (15 weeks), the localised TBLT method was deployed in the experimental group, while a traditional PPP approach was used for the control group.

Chapter 6 Intervention Study

In this chapter, we examine the efficiency of the localised TBLT principles derived from the case study on oral performance through an intervention study, considering accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Descriptive statistics and significance tests were employed when analysing the quantitative data. This chapter is organised as follows: (1) description of participants, (2) instruments, (3) data collection procedures, (4) data analysis method, (5) report of the intervention study results, and (6) summary of the intervention study.

6.1 Participants

A total of 101 students took part in the intervention study, divided in two classes from Middle School B with the cooperation of Teacher 5 (an EFL teacher with 9 years' teaching experience). School B is at the mid-level in terms of examination results, teacher resources, and hardware facilities in Shijiazhuang. Hence, this school effectively represents the average level of English education in the area. Further, the principal and senior teachers are open-minded, creative, and willing to incorporate new pedagogy to improve teachers' English teaching skills and learners' English proficiency. They also expressed interest in the current research design, and the researcher was warmly welcomed.

The 101 students from two natural classes in Grade Seven of Middle School B were selected to participate in the intervention. The experimental group (N = 50) adopted localised TBLT, and the control group's (N = 51) lessons were administered using traditional instruction methods. As newcomers, all classes had taken an entrance examination on the first day of middle school life to facilitate class grouping. This ensured that the average proficiency level in each class was similar, as required by education equality in China. To guarantee that students' English communicative levels in the chosen natural classes were also at similar levels, a pre-test was conducted to assess the oral performance. The pre-test took the form of a PET (detailed information in Section 6.2.2) and included a self-introduction and a question for expression in English. Finally, with some attrition, the valid data of 47 students in each class were used for data analysis. The findings of the pre-test revealed that students' average performance in the two classes was similar in terms of oral production (mean of experimental group = 1.200; mean of control group = 1.198), which provided justification for the intervention research.

Teacher 5 is an EFL teacher in Middle School B and was invited to cooperate with the author to deliver the teaching to both the experimental and control groups. One student in Teacher 5's class received 119 marks (full marks = 120) in the 2020 Senior High School Entrance Examination, and the average score in her class was also the highest in the school.

6.2 Instruments

The instruments included a test evaluation scheme, oral proficiency pre- and post-tests, and localised TBLT and traditional instruction design material for the intervention.

6.2.1 Test Evaluation Scheme

In the current study, the dimensions of accuracy, fluency, and complexity were employed for the purpose of assessing students' oral performance. As elaborated in the literature review, an adapted measurement framework of L2 oral production (see Table 7) was adopted for the intervention study by referring to Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) CAF measurements. Specifically, fluency was assessed according to the number of words every 60 seconds and the number of pauses or repetitions every 60 seconds (Bui & Huang, 2018; Skehan, 1996a). The vocabulary of Grade 7 students is easy to follow, with more one-syllable words. Thus, the number of words instead of number of syllables acted as one variable for measuring fluency in this study. To produce a more valid assessment, accuracy was assessed according to the number of correct verb forms and number of error-free clauses, using multiple measures to evaluate one dimension of L2 production in the current project (Ellis, 2005). Complexity was measured by the number of subordinations and the number of different grammatical verb forms in this study (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Considering the student participants' English proficiency in

Grade Seven, we used the third-person singular form (e.g., has, is, does) and modal verbs as the grammatical verb forms to measure. Unfortunately, using different measures renders it difficult to provide a unified mark that represents the speakers' overall performance (including fluency, complexity, and accuracy). Hence, it is greatly necessary to find a unified measurement to assess EFL learners' overall oral production in this study (see Table 18).

Table 18. Test Band Descriptors

Band	**Fluency**	**Accuracy**	**Complexity**
8-10	speaks fluently with only rare repetition or correction	produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriate words or basic/non-systematic errors	uses a wide range of structures (subordinations) and grammatical verb forms (third person single forms or modality) flexibly
5-7	may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times or some repetition and/or self-correction	frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	uses a range of complex structures (subordinations) and grammatical verb forms (third person single forms or modality) with some flexibility
2-4	usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going	errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	uses a limited range of more complex structures with little flexibility, and these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems
0-1	long pauses before most words	cannot produce basic sentence forms	attempts basic sentences forms but with limited success

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) band descriptors for oral tests have a high level of fit with the measurement of CAF, and can also indicate scores for each

dimension and overall oral performance. There are four indices in the IELTS speaking test band descriptors: fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The standards of accuracy and fluency in IELTS descriptors coincide with Skehan's (1996a) definitions, whose descriptors of coherence, lexical resource, and grammatical range can reflect the complexity level of test takers' oral performance more accurately (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Pronunciation is not mentioned in Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis' (2003) evaluation schemes, possibly because pronunciation performance can be attributed to the dimension of accuracy accordingly, as mentioned in the literature review. The relationship between IELTS band descriptors and CAF is shown in Figure 1.

Considering the English proficiency of Grade 7 EFL learners in China, we adapted IELTS band descriptors based on the measurement framework of L2 oral production (see Table 7) as the evaluation scheme in this study (shown in Table 18). Complexity was assessed according to the number of subordinations and the number of grammatical verb forms (third-person singular form and modal verbs) instead of 'coherence, lexical resources and grammatical range', shown in the IELTS band descriptors, because the two CAF variables are easier to measure and more suitable for Grade 7 students' English proficiency.

On the strength of Measurement Framework of Oral Production (Table 7) and the Test Band Descriptors (Table 18), we designed the following marking table for oral performance (Table

19). The information in Table 19 was used to grade student participants' oral production in the pre- and post-tests, aiming at quantifying EFL students' improvement by considering fluency, accuracy, complexity and overall oral performance after the intervention study. Since different sub-categories measured different aspects, we designed different values for the same band. For example, if a student produced more than 55 words in a minute, they would get a score of 5 for Value 1 (No. of words per minute). Similarly, if the student had less than one pauses/repetitions/self-correction, they would be marked 5 in Value 2 (No. of pauses, repetitions/self-correction). We collected scores for the six values to measure students' oral performance.

Each dimension of CAF has two measures. Fluency was measured by the number of words every 60 seconds and the number of pauses and self-corrections/repetitions, accuracy was assessed by the number of correct verb forms and the number of error-free clauses, and complexity was evaluated by the number of subordinations and the number of grammatical verb forms (third-person singular form and modality). The maximum score for each measure, with two measures included in one dimension, was 5. The detailed rating scale is illustrated clearly in Table 19. Thus, the full score for each dimension is 10, and a full mark for a student's overall oral performance is 30. For example, if a student achieved 41 words per minute and 4 repetitions in a whole oral product, their mark for the item 'no. of words per minute' would be 4, and for the item 'no. of self-corrections/repetitions' would be 3. Thus, the student's overall score for accuracy would be 4 + 3 = 7.

Table 19. Marking Table for Oral Performance

Score	Fluency		Accuracy		Complexity	
	1. No. of words per minute	**2. No. of pauses/ repetitions/self-corrections per minute**	**3. No. of correct verb forms**	**4. No. of error-free clauses**	**5. No. of subordinations**	**6. No. of grammatical verb forms (**third person singular form and modality**)**
5	>50	<2	≥15	≥9	≥10	≥15
4	41–50	2–3	12–14	7-8	8–9	12–14
3	31–40	4–5	9–11	5-6	6–7	9–11
2	21–30	6–7	6–8	3-4	4–5	6–8
1	11–20	8–9	3–5	1-2	2–3	3–5
0	<11	>9	≤2	0	≤1	≤2

To clearly explain how different marking decisions were made during the marking process based on the marking table (Table 19), we show the following example (by George).

I am George, 13 years old. My hometown is in Shijiazhuang, China. I love my hometown, because ……the people there are very kind. I am now in Class 11, Grade 7. I like play basketball after class. My father often play with me. I also like draw…..er……drawing. This is my room. Three picture…three pictures is on the wall. There is a sofa in the…in the living room. Some fruits is on the table. En…Ur…My bag is under the table. A TV is next…next to the sofa. The telephone is under my bed in the bedroom. There is two keys on the table of my bedroom. A kitchen room is near my bedroom, where my mother usually cooks. I love my bedroom very much, because……en… I can study and sleep well there.

A total of 125 words, excluding filled pauses, repetitions, and replacements in the text, were produced by the student George in 4 minutes. Thus, the number of words per minute was 31.25, which was marked 3 for the first sub-scale of fluency (number of words per minute). In addition, seven pauses/repetitions/self-corrections were made in 4 minutes. Hence, the number of pauses/repetitions/self-corrections per minute was 1.4, which was marked 5 for the second sub-scale of fluency (number of pauses/repetitions/self-corrections per minute). Thus, the students' score for fluency was 3+5=8.

Regarding accuracy, the number of correct verb forms was 15, which was marked 5 for the first sub-scale of accuracy (number of correct verb forms). The number of error-free clauses was 3, which was marked 2 for the second sub-scale of accuracy (number of error-free clauses). Therefore, the students' score for accuracy was 5+2=7.

In terms of complexity, the student produced four subordinations, which was marked 2 for the first sub-scale of complexity (number of subordinations). The number of grammatical verb forms with third person singular form and modality included was nine, which was marked 3 for the second sub-scale of complexity (number of grammatical verb forms). Hence, the student's score for complexity was 2+3=5. Totally, the overall score for George's oral production was 8+7+5=20.

The author and another EFL teacher in the middle school assessed the learners' oral performance in the pre-and post-tests cooperatively according to the assessment framework in Table 19. Any large differences in measurements between the two raters were discussed carefully and in detail until agreement was reached on the final result.

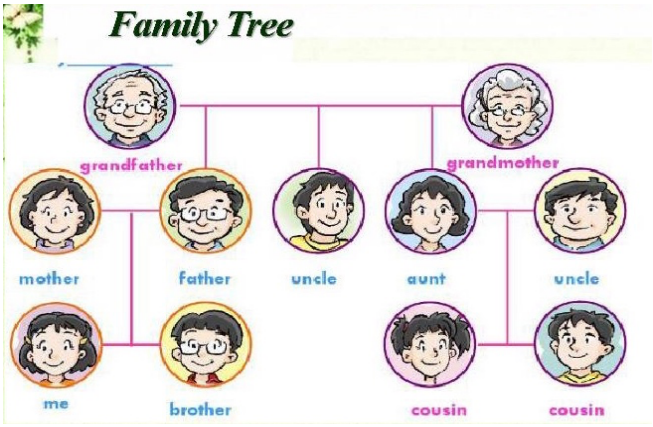
6.2.2 Pre- and Post-oral Proficiency Tests

The pre- and post-tests were adapted from the Cambridge PET reported by Mohammadipour and Rashid (2015) to measure students' overall oral performance. The test content in this project was slightly modified from that in Mohammadipour and Rashid (2015), who used four sections in one test, namely, 1) introducing oneself, 2) communicating between two candidates, 3) taking about a photograph, and 4) conversation according to a theme in the third section. In the current study, taking Grade 7 learners' English proficiency into consideration, we excluded peer interaction and based-on-theme conversation mentioned in Mohammadipour and Rashid's study. However, a self-introduction and description of a picture in English were included in the pre- and post-tests of the current project. It took around 10 min for the participants to finish the test. All data was sound-recorded, and each test involved two parts.

In Part 1, the students communicated with the assessor by talking about personal information, including their name, hometown, age, school, grade, and interests. In Part 2, the participants were given a picture and required to describe the information contained. All the questions in

Part 2 were designed by combining the People's Education Press (PEP) textbook and the Cambridge PET oral test form. The topics of the four options were closely related to the unit themes in the PEP textbook for Grade 7 students. In addition, words and grammatical rules used to describe pictures were within the content range and proficiency range of the textbook. Therefore, the difficulty level of the four options could better suit the student participants' English levels. The four options were as follows:

Option one: Introduce your family members (e.g., ages, jobs, and schools)



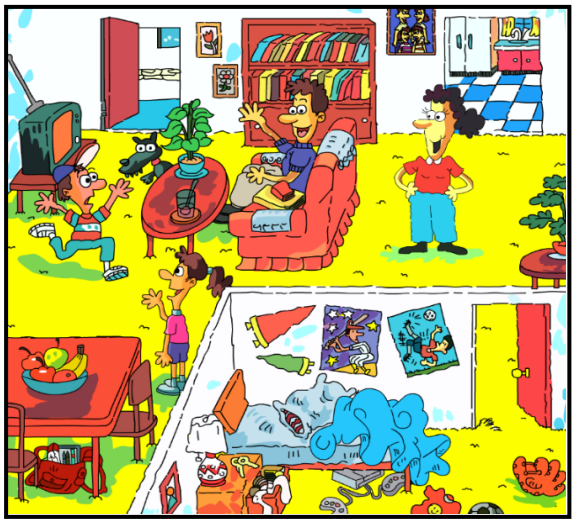
Option 2: Talk about routines; ask about and say times

Timetable for the Summer Camp	
7:30	Getting Up
7:50 -- 8:00	Morning Exercise
8:00	Breakfast
8:30 -- 9:10	1st Class
9:20 -- 10:00	2nd Class
Break Time	
10:30 -- 11:10	3rd Class
11:20 -- 12:00	4th Class
12:00 -- 12:40	Lunch Time
12:40 -- 14:00	Nap Hour
14:20 -- 15:00	5th Class
15:10 -- 15:50	6th Class
16:00 -- 17:30	Outdoor Activities
Free Time	
18:00 -- 18:50	Dinner Time
19:00 -- 20:20	English Activities
20:30 -- 20:50	Night Snack
21:30	Bed Time
~~ Good Night	

Option 3: Talk about your likes and dislikes

Like	Sport	
	Food	
Dislike	Sport	
	Food	

Option 4: Introduce your room (e.g., prepositions of locality)



A pilot test was then conducted to determine two options that had the same difficulty levels for the pre- and post-tests. Four students and two EFL teachers (who participated in the interviews) in Grade 7 of Middle School A were chosen randomly to take part in the pilot test. Each testee was asked to describe the four pictures sequentially, and the two teachers acted as evaluators to rate the students' oral performance according to the test band descriptors in Table 17 (Instrument 1). Although some words were provided for options 1, 2 and 3 with no clues for option 4, students in the pilot test could quickly understand the main point and recall language forms for option 4, because they were familiar with the picture (Option 4) that was included in

the textbook. The results indicated that the average score of Option 1 (M = 1.925) was very close to that of Option 4 (M = 1.95). Hence, these two options were chosen as the two test questions for the pre- and post-tests in the main study. Accordingly, a picture of a family tree was selected for Part 2 of the pre-test, and a picture of a room was selected for Part 2 of the post-test.

6.2.3 Localised Task-Based Language Teaching and Traditional Instruction Design for the Intervention

All localised task topics were selected and designed based on the teaching content in each unit of the PEP textbook for Grade 7. The Localised TBLT design was created based on Willis' TBLT framework and the findings from the case study. In Willis' TBLT theory, there are three procedures to finish a task: pre-task, task cycle, and focus-on-form. The teachers' suggestions and some principles of localising TBLT in China's examination-oriented context derived from the case study were also adapted in the localised TBLT instruction design. The principles included connecting topics of TBLT with language items for examination to save task preparation time and reduce task difficulty levels, reducing task-based interaction time in class and reserving more time for traditional teaching, and incorporating traditional PPP phases into the localised TBLT design for examination requirements. In the experimental class, the tasks were the centre of teaching, and all linguistic items, forms, or vocabulary would serve as measures for task performance. The learning goal for the students in the experimental class

was to perform the task successfully using English.

A traditional instruction procedure was designed according to the PPP method, which comprises three steps: presentation, practice, and production. Each procedure focused on linguistic items, such as vocabulary and sentence structure. In the traditional teaching method, the students also had oral practice. However, this was different from task-based conversations, because the oral practice materials of PPP were provided by the textbook and were practiced under control. In task-based conversations, the meaning was the first concern, and then topic-related expressions would be conducted by referring to sample sentences. In other words, task-based interactions focused on meaning, not merely practicing the learning materials presented in the textbook. Samples of detailed localised TBLT and traditional instruction designs for the intervention are presented in Tables 14–17. The topics for each week, with pre- and post-test information included, are provided in Table 5.

6.3 Data Collection Procedures of the Intervention Study

The intervention study of this doctoral thesis mainly comprised three steps: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. This section presents the quantitative data collection procedures in detail.

6.3.1. Pre-test

Before the intervention, a pre-test was organised for participants in the chosen two natural classes to guarantee that their oral performance was at a similar level. The data were also used to compare students' oral production before and after the intervention. As shown in Instrument 2, the pre-test adopted the form of the Cambridge PET applied in Mohammadipour and Rashid's (2015) study as a pre- and post-oral test to assess English students' speaking production in middle school. The students took approximately 10 min to complete the test, and all data was sound-recorded. Each test involved two parts:

Part 1: Candidates communicated with the assessor, talking about personal information, such as their name, hometown, age, school, grade, and interests.

Part 2: Candidates were given a picture of a family tree and then asked to describe the information presented.

6.3.2. Intervention

The intervention period lasted for 15 weeks from September 2020 to December 2020. Teacher 5 has rich experience in communicative language teaching and has achieved good performance in raising students' examination scores. Accordingly, she was invited to take part in the intervention study and simultaneously taught the experimental group with the localised TBLT and the control group with a traditional instruction method.

The intervention materials were selected from the PEP English textbook for Grade 7. The teaching topics were the same for the experimental and control groups, although the teaching methods and procedures were different. The localised TBLT design for the experimental group was created based on Willis' TBLT design and findings from the case study. Some principles were considered important in the localised TBLT design. These included limiting task-based interactions to 20 min in class, connecting topics in TBLT with language items for examination, adopting different tasks for students with different English proficiencies, and incorporating traditional PPP into the localised TBLT design. These principles were included to help students master target language forms, as well as to improve their skills in using English. The traditional instruction method for the control group was conducted based on PPP phases to enhance students' acquisition of language structures correctly. A detailed comparison of treatments for the two groups in the intervention period is presented in Figure 3.

In the experimental class, localised task-based instruction and interactions were conducted three times a week, each lasting 50 min. The teaching content during the lessons for students in the experimental group were the same as for the control group. To ensure that the lessons in the experimental group were task-based and adaptive to China's examination-oriented context, localised TBLT instruction designs were cooperatively created by the researcher and another doctoral student majoring in English language education. This was based on the data collected from the case study. The researcher and the teacher participant collaboratively created the traditional instruction designs (Teacher 5).

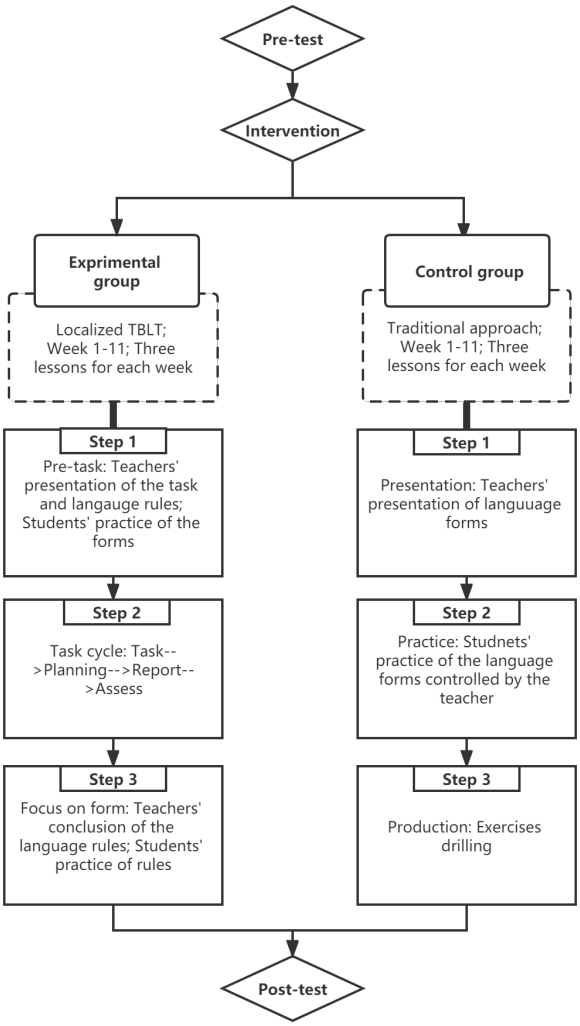


Figure 3. Process of the Intervention Study

6.3.3 Post-test

After the intervention period, a post-test was arranged to analyse improvements in speaking production. This post-test content also took the form of a PET oral test covering two parts: talking about personal information in English and describing a picture of a room in English. All data were sound recorded. The entire data collection process for the intervention study is

displayed in Figure 3.

6.4 Data Analysis of the Intervention Study

The author and another EFL teacher in a middle school evaluated the learners' oral performance in the pre-test and post-test cooperatively according to the measurement rubrics in Section 6.2.1. Any significant differences in measurements between the two raters were discussed carefully and in detail until they agreed on the final results. To analyse the collected quantitative data, a series of independent sample t-tests were performed on the CAF measures. We set alpha to .05 to achieve statistical significance. Cohen's *d* was also calculated to show the effect sizes (0.2 for small effect size, 0.5 for medium effect size, and 0.8 or above for large effect size).

6.5 Intervention Study Results

Independent sample t-tests were deployed to report the intervention study results in this part. Descriptive statistics (with means and standard deviations included) and inferential statistics (including *p* value and effect sizes) were analysed to measure students' learning outcomes on CAF, as well as the overall oral performance.

6.5.1 Effects on Overall Oral Performance

The statistics of overall oral performance were the sum of scores for CAF. Thus, the full mark for oral production for each student was 30 points. The descriptive statistics (Table 20) and the inferential statistics (Table 21) for overall oral performance indicated a significant difference in pre-post mean difference in overall oral performance between the localised TBLT approach (M = 3.000, SD = 2.703) and the traditional PPP method (M = 1.383, SD = 2.212), t (92) = 3.174, p (two-tailed) = .002, Cohen's d = 0.655 (meaning a good-medium effect size). This meant that after the intervention, students who received the localised TBLT (mean of pre-post difference = 3.000) had a larger improvement in oral production than the EFL students in the traditional PPP class (mean of pre-post difference = 1.383). The effect size (Cohen's d = 0.655) was medium. Hence, it can be stated that the localised task-based instruction designed in this study was more efficient in improving students' overall oral performance.

The aims of localised TBLT in China are to improve EFL leaners' language use skills and help students master correct language forms. As a communicative method, it had the right mix of focus-on-form and focus-on-meaning. In the pre-task, language forms were emphasised and practiced to enable the use of input to complete the task and perform it in class. Then, in the second stage, meaning was stressed in students' task-based interactions, communications, and discussions. In the language focus phase, grammatical rules were concluded and presented again by the teacher. After-class follow-ups (such as student design tests) also consolidated what students had learned in the localised TBLT class. For this reason, the EFL students in the

experimental group (localised TBLT) made significant progress in overall oral production by comparing the pre-test and post-test results.

Table 20. Descriptive Statistics for Pre- and Post-test Scores

Dimension	Pre				Post				Pre-Post Diff			
	Con		Exp		Con		Exp		Con		Exp	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
F1	2.638	1.040	2.809	1.065	2.830	1.038	3.511	0.942	0.191	0.673	0.702	1.009
F2	2.213	1.184	2.234	0.927	2.213	0.921	2.915	1.088	0.000	0.684	0.681	0.853
Fluency	**4.851**	**2.039**	**5.043**	**1.738**	**5.043**	**1.879**	**6.426**	**1.899**	**0.191**	**0.914**	**1.383**	**1.467**
A1	2.277	1.046	2.234	0.994	2.702	1.109	2.532	0.896	0.426	0.765	0.298	0.769
A2	1.957	1.148	2.191	1.104	2.298	0.987	2.255	0.956	0.340	0.693	0.064	0.909
Accuracy	**4.234**	**2.055**	**4.426**	**1.899**	**5.000**	**2.021**	**4.787**	**1.688**	**0.766**	**1.189**	**0.362**	**1.262**
C1	1.191	0.733	1.213	0.742	1.404	0.571	1.830	0.781	0.213	0.682	0.617	0.759
C2	1.702	0.769	1.319	0.587	1.915	0.613	1.957	0.713	0.213	0.682	0.638	0.599
Complexity	**2.894**	**1.325**	**2.532**	**1.028**	**3.319**	**1.074**	**3.378**	**1.254**	**0.426**	**1.005**	**1.255**	**0.811**
Overall	**11.979**	**4.901**	**12.000**	**4.366**	**13.362**	**4.651**	**15.000**	**4.534**	**1.383**	**2.188**	**3.000**	**2.674**

Note: Diff = Difference, Exp = Experimental, and Con = Control,

F1 = First Sub-scale of Fluency, F2 = Second Sub-scale of Fluency, A1 = First Sub-scale of Accuracy, A2 = Second Sub-scale of Accuracy, C1 = First Sub-scale of Complexity, and C2 = Second Sub-scale of Complexity

Table 21. Inferential Statistics for Pre- and Post-test Scores

Dimension	*t* value	*p* value	Cohen's *d*
F1	2.856	0.005 *	0.596
F2	4.222	0.000*	0.880
Fluency	**4.696**	**0.000***	**0.965**
A1	0.798	0.427	
A2	1.642	0.104	
Accuracy	**1.581**	**0.117**	
C1	2.686	0.009*	0.560
C2	3.180	0.002*	0.655
Complexity	**4.357**	**0.000***	**0.898**
Overall	**3.174**	**0.002***	**0.655**

Note: F1 = First Sub-scale of Fluency, F2 = Second Sub-scale of Fluency, A1 = First Sub-scale of Accuracy, A2 = Second Sub-scale of Accuracy, C1 = First Sub-scale of Complexity, and C2 = Second Sub-scale of Complexity, * = <.05

6.5.2 Effects on Fluency

To evaluate the fluency of students' oral performance before and after the intervention, measures including number of words every 60 seconds (Skehan, 1996a) and number of pauses/repetitions per minute (Bui and Huang, 2018) were used. The maximum score for each measure was 5, with two measures included in the fluency dimension. Thus, the full mark for fluency was 10 points, according to the marking table (Table 19).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-post mean difference in

fluency in the experimental (localised TBLT) and control (traditional PPP method) groups. The descriptive statistics in Table 20 and inferential statistics in Table 21 indicated a significant difference in the pre-post mean difference in fluency between the localised TBLT approach (M = 1.383, SD = 1.483) and the traditional PPP method (M = 0.191, SD = 0.924), t (92) = 4.676, p (two-tailed) = .000, Cohen's d = 0.965 (a large effect size). Considering the first sub-scale of fluency (F1: number of words per minute), the independent samples t-test results indicated a significant difference in the pre-post mean difference between the localised TBLT approach (M = 0.702, SD = 0.149) and the traditional PPP method (M = 0.191, SD = 0.099), t (92) = 2.856, p (two-tailed) = .005, Cohen's d = 0.596 (a good-medium effect size). In regard of the second sub-scale (F2: number of self-corrections/repetitions), there was a significant difference in pre-post mean difference between the experimental group (M = 0.681, SD = 0.126) and the control group (M = 0.000, SD = 0.101), t (92) = 4.222, p (two-tailed) = .000, Cohen's d = 0.880 (a large effect size). This means that after the intervention, students who received localised TBLT (mean of pre-post difference = 1.383) exhibited a significant and large improvement in fluency compared to EFL learners in the traditional PPP class (mean of pre-post difference = 0.191).

Hence, the independent-samples t-tests results indicated that learners who had received the localised TBLT could speak English more fluently. This manifested as using more words per minute and fewer self-corrections/repetitions compared to those in the traditional instruction group. Thus, it was confirmed that the localised TBLT method had a larger effect on enhancing students' fluency in speaking performance.

The results appeared to indicate that task-based interactions or communication may have increased EFL learners' opportunities to exchange ideas and negotiate meaning, which helped students improve their fluency in English speaking, as reported in previous studies (e.g., Bui & Huang, 2018; Albino, 2017). In addition, more opportunities were provided for practicing English orally in the task preparation and task performance phases in the localised TBLT instruction design of this study. In contrast, students only practiced sentence structures or words already prepared by the teacher or in textbooks in the traditional PPP instruction lessons, which resulted in the learners being slower when applying learned grammatical rules to real-life communication. This is in accordance with Willis (1996), who argued that EFL learners under the PPP approach sometimes use target language forms too much and that they remain 'in practice mode' (p. 134), with the intention of producing language structures instead of expressing ideas.

6.5.3 Effects on Accuracy

To assess the accuracy of students' oral production pre- and post-intervention, measures including the number of correct verb forms (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010) and the number of error-free clauses (Yuan & Ellis, 2003) were employed. The maximum score for each measure was 5, with two measures included in the accuracy dimension. Thus, the full mark for accuracy was 10 points, according to the marking table (Table 19).

Although Table 20 indicates that students who received traditional PPP (mean of pre-post difference = 0.766) tended to display larger improvements in accuracy compared to those in the localised TBLT group (mean of pre-post difference = 0.362), the difference did not reach a significant level, as shown in Table 21 (t (92) = 1.581, p (two-tailed) = .117). Generally, this suggests that after the intervention, the efficiency of localised TBLT was not significantly different from that of the traditional PPP method in terms of accuracy. Hence, it can be concluded that localised TBLT did not outperform the traditional PPP method in enhancing the accuracy of EFL students' oral production.

Although minor mistakes during task performance were not corrected by the teacher, accuracy was emphasised in the post-task (focus-on-form). The teacher was central in concluding grammar rules that appeared in task performance, and the students in the experimental group also realized the importance of mastering English accurately in the language focus phase. This was why learners in the experimental group exhibited a slight improvement (mean of pre-post difference = 0.362) in the accuracy of oral performance.

In the task cycle of the localised TBLT method, task-based interactions or communication were emphasised, and the accuracy of language forms was not a particular focus. This contrasts with the traditional PPP approach, where the accuracy of grammatical rules and language forms is strongly emphasised in the whole process of instruction (Swan, 2005; Yamaoka, 2005). For example, as illustrated by Teacher 5 during the task, students exchange meanings or discuss

ways of reporting a task to use English for doing something. In comparison, in the traditional PPP class, the teacher presented sample sentences and new words to allow the students to recite the rules correctly and continue practicing until the learners could ultimately produce grammatical rules accurately. The different emphases in implementation between the two teaching methods (meaning focused in the *Task Cycle* for the localised TBLT and form focused for all steps of the PPP method) could explain why localised TBLT could not outperform the traditional PPP method in enhancing the accuracy of EFL students' speaking production.

6.5.4 Effects on Complexity

This section pertains to the effect of localised TBLT and the traditional PPP method on the complexity of middle school EFL students' speaking performance. For the sake of evaluating complexity, the measures embrace the number of subordinations (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010) and the use of different grammatical verb forms (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010). The maximum score for each measure was 5, with two measures included in the complexity dimension. Thus, the full mark for complexity was 10 according to the marking table (Table 19).

The descriptive statistics and inferential statistics listed in Tables 20 and 21 suggest a significant difference in pre-post mean difference in complexity between the localised TBLT approach (M = 1.255, SD = 0.820) and the traditional PPP method (M = 0.426, SD = 1.016), t (92) = 4.357, p (two-tailed) = .000, Cohen's d = 0.898 (meaning a large effect size).

Considering the first sub-scale of complexity (C1: number of subordinations), the independent samples *t*-test results indicated that there was still a significant pre-post mean difference between the localised TBLT approach ($M = 0.617$, $SD = 0.768$) and the traditional PPP method ($M = 0.213$, $SD = 0.690$), $t\ (92) = 2.686$, p (two-tailed) = .009, Cohen's $d = 0.560$ (meaning a good-medium effect size). In terms of the second sub-scale (C2: number of grammatical verb forms), there was a significant pre-post mean difference between the experimental group ($M = 0.638$, $SD = 0.605$) and the control group ($M = 0.213$, $SD = 0.690$), $t\ (92) = 3.180$, p (two-tailed) = .002, Cohen's $d = 0.655$ (meaning a good-medium effect size). This means that after the intervention, students who received localised TBLT (mean of pre-post difference = 1.255) displayed a significant and large improvement in complexity compared to the EFL learners in the traditional PPP class (mean of pre-post difference = 0.426).

As illustrated by Teacher 5, students in the localised TBLT class were encouraged to use various forms of language freely in group discussions to prepare for a task. She also mentioned that students in the localised TBLT class could use the third-person singular form included in the second sub-scale of complexity (C2: number of grammatical verb forms) frequently and correctly. In addition, during task performance, the EFL learners tried every means to think about and use a wide range of structures (including subordinations) to express themselves clearly (Carless, 2009), meaning that different expressions were practiced. In comparison, students in the traditional PPP class practiced only the language items set by the teacher (Thornbury, 1999). This could be why students in the localised TBLT class exhibited a

significant and larger improvement in terms of complexity after the intervention compared to the control group.

The findings of the independent-samples t-tests indicated that after the intervention, students who received localised TBLT (mean of pre-post difference = 1.255) displayed a significant and large improvement in complexity compared to EFL learners in the traditional PPP class (mean of pre-post difference = 0.426). This could be attributable to the localised TBLT approach being able to motivate students to use subordinations and grammatical verb forms (third person singular form and modality) to a greater extent compared to traditional instruction methods.

6.6 Summary of Intervention Study

The 101 students were divided into two groups during the intervention (according to their similar entrance examination and pre-test results): experimental (localised TBLT) and control (traditional PPP). Pre- and post-tests were conducted before and after the intervention using PET. Ultimately, 94 (47 in the experimental group and 47 in the control group) students' data were valid for the analysis. For the measurement framework, the IELTS band descriptors were revised by adopting Skehan's (1996a) framework, Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement framework, and Bui and Skehan's (2018) measurement schemes considering CAF. In addition, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to analyse the quantitative data. Moreover,

Cohen's *d* was also calculated to test the effect size of each dimension with sub-scales included.

It can be summarized that, the experimental group outperformed the control group in regard to fluency, complexity, and overall oral performance after the intervention. However, they had worse performance than the control group regarding accuracy. This may be due to the different methodological principles of localised TBLT and the traditional PPP method. Localised TBLT places less emphasis on meaning communication, idea exchange, and personal interactions, meaning that students in the experimental group conversed with a higher frequency and used a greater variety of English forms freely. This improved their fluency and complexity significantly, as reported in previous studies (e.g., Bui & Huang 2018; Carless, 2009). One aspect that needs examination is that because of the principle of targeting learning content toward examinations, students in the localised TBLT class exhibited slight progress in accuracy (mean of pre-post difference = 0.362), although this improvement was not significant.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This section elaborates a detailed discussion of the key results discovered in the case study and intervention study. First, the Chinese EFL teachers' understandings and practice of task-based instruction, as well as their suggestions related to TBLT are discussed. Subsequently, the operational mechanism behind the findings in the intervention study is explained. In addition, a localised TBLT framework for China is proposed by comparing with Willis' classic TBLT and other localised TBLT forms reported in the literature. Finally, the revised CAF evaluation scheme is discussed.

7.1 Discussion on the Chinese EFL Teachers' Understandings and Practice Related to Task-Based Language Teaching

The case study results revealed that EFL teachers in China displayed a broadly positive picture of TBLT implementation. They perceived that TBLT tended to motivate students' EFL learning, improve engagement, and reduce the fear of making mistakes when speaking English. Given China's examination-oriented education context, the EFL teachers thought that some modifications should be made to classic TBLT if it was to be used in real classrooms. This was because of the obstacles encountered by the teacher participants, such as conflicts between traditional Chinese culture and TBLT and the difficulties in implementing TBLT in large classes. Therefore, in actual practice, these Chinese EFL teachers either adopted TBLT in

special cases (teaching skills contests and open lectures) or limited TBLT implementation time to 15 min in regular teaching classes. In addition, they provided some suggestions on localising TBLT in China's examination-oriented culture.

7.1.1 Advantages and Obstacles Encountered when Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in China

The teacher participants' positive attitudes toward TBLT implementation in China were reflected by the main advantages they identified: (1) motivating EFL learning, (2) improving engagement, and (3) reducing students' fears of making mistakes. The merits of increasing motivation and engagement among language learnings in TBLT classrooms agree with the findings of Willis (1996), who identified this potential. This could be explained by the fact that task-based instruction is learner-centred, experimental (Carless, 2009) and interactional. Hence, compared with the relatively uninteresting language rules in traditional instruction lessons, various activities related to learners' real lives are included in TBLT, resulting in more students being motivated to engage in learning and discussions. Furthermore, Willis (1996) suggested that communicative tasks contribute to interactions between learners in the target language. Hence, less advanced students in a group would be encouraged by other group members to participate in task-based learning.

The third advantage found in the case study also supports the findings in the literature review,

where task-based instruction allows students to communicate freely by using the target language without worrying about penalties for vocabulary or grammatical mistakes (Willis, 1996). The result of reducing the fear of mistakes in the TBLT approach (as suggested by Harris, 2018) is that students are freer to talk about things without caring about language rules. This could be interpreted by the fact that the TBLT is meaning-focused, and meaning exchange for a real purpose plays a significant role in foreign language learning (Willis, 1996), rather than merely producing language forms.

The case study results also revealed that the Chinese EFL teachers encountered some obstacles when implementing TBLT in classrooms. The first was the conflict between traditional Chinese culture and TBLT. Greatly influenced by the Confucian culture for a long time, examinations have a high stake in China's education system, resulting in traditional and passive approaches being common in China, leaving students perplexed by communicative TBLT (Anderson, 1993). This also applies to students in Hong Kong (Carless, 2009; Tang, 2004) and Japan (Harris, 2018).

Most teacher participants in this case study also mentioned the difficulty of implementing TBLT in large classes, which has also been noted as a barrier in the Korean (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Li, 1998) and Hong Kong (Carless, 2002) contexts. Li (1998) stated that it is hard to manage a large class, leading to difficulties when changing from more traditional teaching styles. Similarly, Littlewood (2007) highlighted the specific difficulty of conducting task-based

instruction in large classes due to practical issues related to inner group communication. The Chinese EFL teachers in the case study also suggested that it is hard to design a task appropriate for all learners with various English proficiency levels, as stated by Butler (2011). Similar sentiments have been revealed in Taiwanese schools, where the inclusion of learners at a variety of proficiency levels renders it difficult for instructors to choose an appropriate task for all students (Lin & Wu, 2012). The teacher participants in this study further indicated that classroom management in large classes presents a significant problem for task-based interactions. This could be explained by one feature of TBLT (Ellis, 2003), which requires a series of participatory structures (e.g., individuals, inner group, inter-group, and the whole class). Therefore, TBLT challenges traditional opinions of good classroom order. Concerning this issue, Carless (2004) suggests that instructors could change their attitude toward noise generated by cooperative work, and they should learn to differentiate between the noise of using a target language for task performance and the noise of classroom disorder.

7.1.2 English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Actual Practice of Task-Based Language Teaching in China

The main characteristic of using TBLT found in the case study was that the Chinese EFL teachers either adopted TBLT at a low frequency (only in teaching skills contests or in open lectures) or in limited class time for regular teaching. This is similar to the findings of Carless (2009), where although TBLT is recommended officially for EFL education in Hong Kong, it

has failed to become universally or equally incorporated in classroom practice. The fact remains that long-standing PPP approaches remain common in Asian schools, also instructors appear to prefer this to TBLT (Tong, 2004).

These findings could be explained by the examination-oriented culture in China, which has existed for a long time. Influenced by 'Confucian heritage' style cultures (Harris, 2018), examinations have a high stake in learning experiences. Moreover, final scores in test papers are what learners, parents, and even teachers are most concerned about. Some students may feel that it is a waste of time to be involved in communicative task-based interactions if they are not focused on language forms (Li, 1998). For them, accurate mastery of vocabulary or grammar is more important than using the target language fluently, according to informal interview results with students in the case study. Meanwhile, teachers are unsure of the learning outcomes of task-based approaches, supporting Carless's (2009) findings in Hong Kong. However, TBLT is highly recommended as a communicative pedagogy by the government of China and is regarded as a basic teaching skill in EFL education (MOE, 2011). In such a context, the Chinese EFL teachers have chosen to either reduce the frequency of using TBLT or limit task-based interaction time in regular teaching.

7.1.3 English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Suggestions for Localised Task-Based Language Teaching in China

During the case study, the teachers offered some suggestions for adapting and localising the TBLT approach toward China's examination-oriented culture. These suggestions included (1) connecting TBLT with language items for examinations, (2) reducing task-based interaction time, and (3) incorporating traditional methods into the localised TBLT approach.

First, since examinations play a dominant role in China's education system, a premise of introducing a new teaching method would be to guarantee an increase in examination scores. Hence, instructors tended to concentrate more on linguistic elements with vocabulary and structures included. This was also found in Carless's (2009) research, where some Hong Kong school teachers provided students with more grammar rules to consolidate grammatical structures learning. One difference between the forms is that vocabulary or grammatical rules in China's EFL classrooms are restricted to the final examination range.

Second, the Chinese EFL teachers suggested reducing task-based interaction time in class to reserve more time for traditional teaching. This supports Willis's (1996) claim that by relying on the needs and backgrounds of language learners, the components of TBLT can be stressed in a different way. In other words, considering the Chinese EFL students' needs, task-based interaction time for communication in class can be reduced to provide more time for language focus. In the literature review, we did not see any other examples of localising TBLT in this way. Hence, this provides some implications for adapting task-based instruction to other Asian areas.

Third, EFL teachers in China suggested incorporating traditional PPP methods into localised TBLT. This manifested as the presentation and practice aspects of PPP being incorporated into the pre-task and language-focus stages in localised TBLT. Ellis (2009) also posited that TBLT should not be seen as a substitute for traditional form-focused methods, as it could be applied in unison. Carless (2009) further suggested combining PPP with TBLT to minimise the limitations of traditional methods rather than simply disusing TBLT. However, few published empirical papers have considered the effect of combining traditional methods with TBLT.

According to the results of the case study and the suggestions made by the teacher participants, some localised TBLT material was designed to be implemented in the subsequent intervention study. After piloting a localised TBLT instruction design with a similar group of target students, the three principles arising from the case study were applied to design localised TBLT lessons for the intervention study. These included connecting TBLT with language items for examinations, reducing task-based interaction time, and incorporating traditional methods into localised TBLT approaches.

7.2 Discussion on the Effectiveness of Localised Task-Based Language Teaching in China

The results of the quantitative data analysis indicated that the localised TBLT framework

designed in the intervention study was more effective in improving students' oral production, with a medium effect size. Specifically, there were significant improvements in fluency and complexity (with a large effect size) compared with traditional instruction methods under China's examination-oriented context. The research results in this study echo the findings from the literature review (e.g., Hasan, 2014; Lan et al., 2016; González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Mulyadi et al., 2021), where a medium-large effect size was achieved in TBLT studies considering its effectiveness, especially on oral performance. The following sections focus on explaining the operation mechanism behind the findings in this study.

7.2.1 A Significant and Large Improvement in Complexity

The quantitative study results demonstrated that localised TBLT had a significant and larger effect than traditional PPP methods on enhancing the complexity of oral production. This accords with Chen's J. C. C. (2020) results, where participants under task-based instruction exhibited a significant increase in grammatical complexity, with a large effect size. Skehan (1996a) posited that complexity can indicate restructuring. If students' attention is focused on language development, they will be motivated to use complex structures (including subordinations) or try out new expressions in English. This was also verified in this study by the independent samples t-test results for the two sub-scales of complexity, where localised TBLT was more helpful in motivating learners to use subordinations and different grammatical verb forms in the target language. The potential of restructuring sentences when

communicating will naturally lead to an increase in complexity, as proposed by Skehan (1996a). Restructuring (complexity) is necessary to keep a system open and capable of change, rendering fluency accessible (Widdowson, 1989), lexicalised, and automatised (Skehan, 1996a). To clarify, complexity acts as a basic role in alleviating fluency levels. This can be explained by the fact that the students under the localised TBLT method performed better considering complexity and fluency. However, if restructuring ability primarily relies on individual efforts without interaction or communication in the learning process, it becomes difficult to improve fluency (Skehan, 1996a), which is reflected in the PPP classroom experienced by the control group. Students who received the traditional teaching method in the control group improved their complexity level (from M = 2.894 to M = 3.319) through individual controlled practice rather than inter-personal communication, which might be why they did not exhibit good improvements (from M = 4.851 to M = 5.043) in fluency. In comparison, students receiving the localised TBLT mastered the ability to speak fluently more effectively after inputting new language elements or restructuring new expressions through finishing a task, as proved by the results of the intervention study.

Similar results were also discovered in the research by Yaprak and Kaya (2020), where students under TBLT produced more utterances and more complex sentences with subordinate clauses. In addition, BavaHarji and Gheitanchian (2017) revealed that multimedia task-based teaching and learning approaches were effective in helping students increase the number of causal subordinations, conjunctions, and prepositions. Accordingly, if EFL teachers in China are

interested in applying a communicative pedagogy and intend to help students improve complexity efficiently, the localised TBLT presented in this study is recommended.

7.2.2 A Significant and Large Improvement in Fluency

First, we will discuss the effectiveness of the localised TBLT on fluency. The results of the independent samples t-tests indicated that students who received the localised TBLT had a significant and large improvement in fluency compared to those in the traditional instruction group. This result is similar to González-Lloret and Nielson's (2015) findings, in which a task-based course helped to improve students' speaking production regarding fluency, with a large effect size. In this study, the students in the experimental group (localised TBLT) had more chances to interact and practice in English when preparing for the task and for the task presentation, as indicated by Teacher 5. In addition, their initiative to use English was aroused during task-based interactions. Therefore, in the post-test, the experimental group members could speak more words in a minute and produced fewer repetitions or pauses, as portrayed in the descriptive statistics. In comparison, students who learned English under the traditional PPP method spent more time learning knowledge elements and practicing fixed structures in class. Accordingly, they performed well when encountering these language items. However, when they were asked to express themselves orally in English, the control group students became dysfluent and always stopped to think about how to translate Chinese into English.

This finding supports the results of Fang et al. (2021), where students under task-based instruction had an awareness of using fluency-oriented strategies for speaking. This included paying more attention to clarity and speaking speed, as well as speaking situation to contribute to listeners' easy understanding. Therefore, learners who received task-based instruction tended to perform well in oral performance, specifically in regards of fluency. This echoes Albino's (2017) finding that students of EFL enhanced their speaking fluency in TBLT approach by maximising the speed of oral production. In this project, the learners in the experimental group (localised TBLT) stated that completion of a task forced them to communicate with other group members, and they tried every means to speak fluently to make themselves understood. In this way, English learners' motivation toward interactions is brought into play. Thus, this research finding provides some implications that EFL teachers in China should adopt the localised TBLT form to satisfy the needs of the NECS in China and help EFL students to speak English fluently.

7.2.3 A Slight Improvement in Accuracy

The results of the independent sample t-tests indicated that improvements in accuracy were not significant after receiving localised TBLT. This contradicts the results in Chen J. C. C.'s (2020) and Khoram's (2019) projects, where a task-based course helped to increase linguistic accuracy significantly, with a large effect size. In this study, TBLT did not outperform traditional instruction in terms of accuracy.

The main reason was that the localised TBLT mainly focused on meaning. For instance, in the task cycle, learners were advised to speak of their ideas without paying much attention to the accuracy of the vocabulary or structure. On this subject, VanPattern (1990), VanPattern and Cadierno (1993) posited that the efficiency of attentional resources is mobilised and that the processing capacity available generates other aspects of communicative pressure. This means that if more attention is placed elsewhere, less attention is available for form and accuracy. Skehan (1996a) also revealed that there is not enough excess ability for students to devote resources to each of the three goals (CAF), meaning that they cannot be achieved at the same time. Consequently, decisions about the prioritisation of attention resources should be made in the process of communication and learning (Skehan, 1996a). This is why students under localised TBLT in China did not improve significantly in terms of accuracy. Even so, their average score slightly increased from the pre-post difference statistics, because we designed some steps to focus-on-form when implementing the localised TBLT. In the pre-task stage, students received input about new vocabulary and sentence structures. Moreover, in the post-task stage, the EFL teachers acted as the centre for transmitting and emphasising linguistic elements that occurred during task performance. In addition, students were provided with more time to practice such knowledge items.

Although some measures and modifications were adopted to enhance accuracy in the localised TBLT design, it still underperformed traditional instruction methods in terms of improving accuracy levels. Therefore, some language-focused activities after the localised TBLT lessons

are required to bridge this gap, such as self-repairs and peer corrections. It has been demonstrated that self-repairs can help foreign language learners concentrate on the accurate use of linguistic elements (Gilabert, 2007; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Only producing a foreign language is not sufficient, as learners should subsequently learn how to analyse and evaluate their output after language use to improve accuracy (Lazaraton, 2001). For example, transcribing one's oral performance is beneficial for improving speakers' correct use of the target language (Burns et al., 1997) and helping them to achieve higher rates of accuracy (Lynch, 2007). Therefore, after a localised TBLT lesson, students are advised to transform their output and repair their mistakes by themselves. In addition to self-repairs, 'corrective feedback' is effective for enhancing the correct use of a foreign language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). From this perspective, peer feedback should be encouraged among group members after localised TBLT phases. Here, students are asked to concentrate on grammatical rules that their group members used in the oral production and then highlight any mistakes.

An interesting finding was that although the interaction time was reduced and the form-focused instruction was increased in the localised TBLT model, we observed a great improvement in fluency but only marginal enhancement in accuracy. The pre-post mean difference in the localised TBLT group and traditional PPP group was used to perform independent samples t-tests. Although the interaction time was reduced in the localised TBLT model, students' active interactions were observed from time to time. By contrast, very little interaction or communication was observed in the traditional PPP classroom. This explains why the students

in the localised TBLT method outperformed those in the traditional PPP method in oral fluency.

Similarly, even though we increased the form-focused instruction in the pre-task and focus-on form phases of the localised TBLT approach, students under the traditional PPP method received a lot more instruction (with presentation, practice and production included) focusing on the accuracy of language forms. In addition, the localised TBLT method focused on meaning in task cycle, where learners were advised to express their ideas without paying much attention to the accuracy of vocabulary or structure. Therefore, the results of the independent samples t-tests only indicated marginal enhancement of the localised TBLT form in accuracy compared with the larger accuracy improvement in the traditional PPP approach. The results echo Skehan's (1996a) findings that complexity, accuracy, and fluency cannot be achieved simultaneously. Given that the improvement of the localised TBLT model in accuracy is slight, some language-focused activities, such as self-repairs and peer corrections mentioned above, after the localised TBLT lessons are needed to bridge this gap.

7.2.4 A Good Medium Improvement in Overall Oral Performance

Overall, the results of the independent samples t-tests indicated that localised TBLT had a good-medium effect (Cohen's $d = 0.655$) on overall oral performance and was superior to traditional methods in this aspect. This finding differs from Mulyadi et al.'s (2021) results, where a TBLT course had a significant influence on learners' speaking performance, with a large effect size.

The results of this study can be explained by a number of reasons. First, the localised TBLT helped to create a relaxed atmosphere in which students could speak English freely without worrying about making mistakes. Second, the oral practice included fixed linguistic items and allowed free expression of opinions. Third, the task topics were usually closely related to real life, which motivated the students to say something in English based on their own experiences. The courage to express oneself in English is a good start to improving oral performance. Fourth, students were encouraged to take part in task-based interactions to help finish the task. Hence, their interest in learning English increased during the learning process. From this perspective, localised TBLT is recommended for helping students develop an interest in English learning and for enhancing oral performance.

This echoes the findings of Ercin (2019), who posited that a weak TBLT setting is only partially effective in improving task performance. However, it should be noted that different educational contexts may result in different research findings. Pham and Do (2020) examined the effectiveness of pure TBLT in Vietnam without conducting localisation. Their study indicated that although TBLT influenced students' grammatical performance positively when speaking, it was not superior to traditional PPP methods. Thus, this suggests that implementing classic TBLT without localisation does not show obvious effects under examination-oriented situations. Therefore, in Asian contexts, it is essential to localise and modify TBLT to apply it efficiently in EFL classrooms.

7.3 A Possible Framework for Localised TBLT in China

In this section, we tentatively suggest a localised TBLT framework (Figure 4) as a comparison to Willis's (1996) TBLT process (Figure 5). The new framework was based on conclusions from the teacher participants' suggestions on localising TBLT in the case study (including targeting language items for examinations, reducing task-based interaction time in class, and incorporating traditional approaches into localised TBLT) and the effectiveness of the localised TBLT in the intervention study.

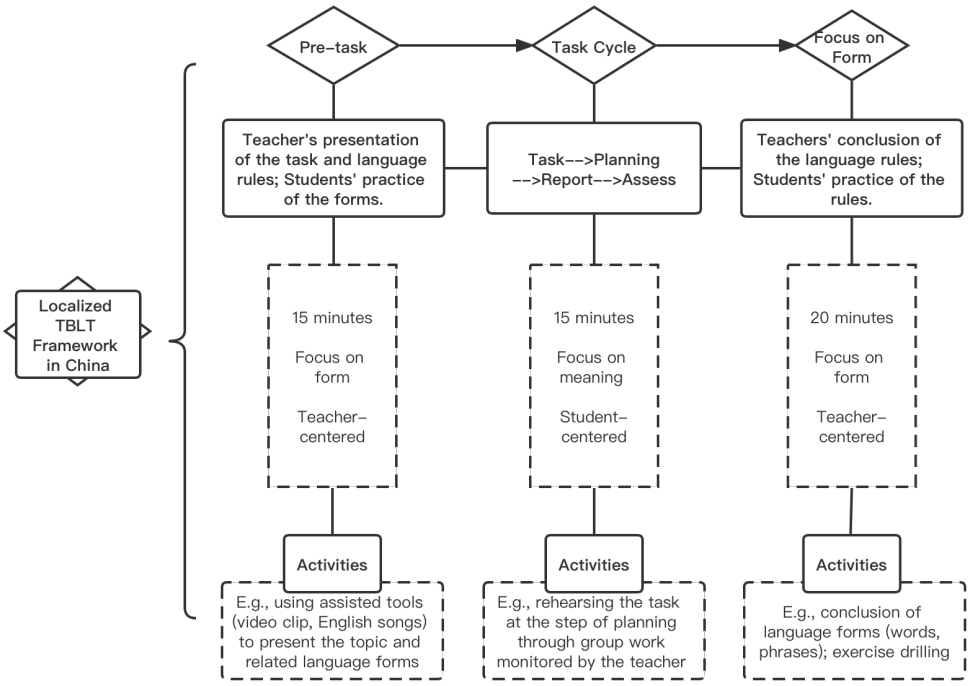
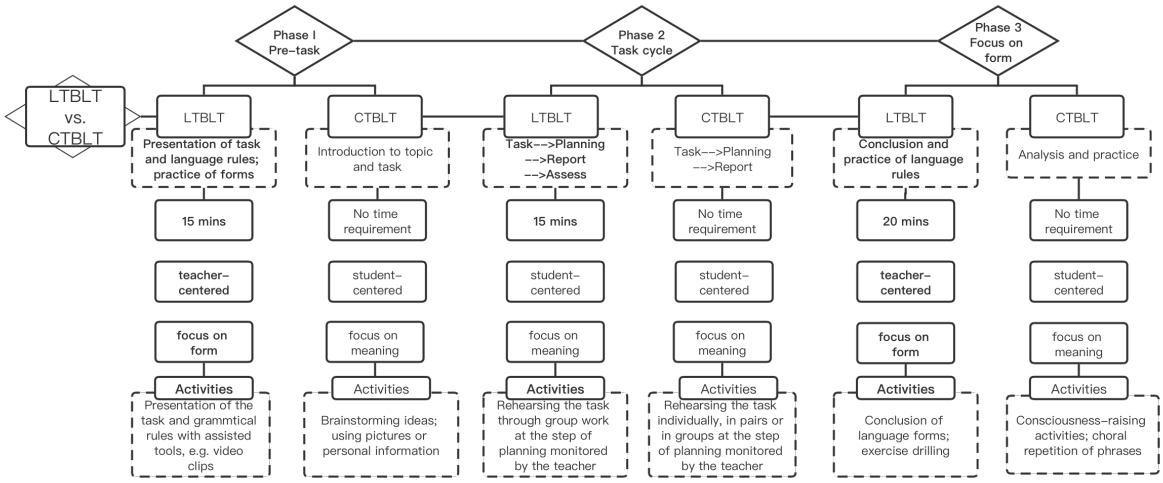


Figure 4. Possible Framework for Localised TBLT in China

The developed localised TBLT framework involves three phases: pre-task, task cycle, and focus-on-form. In the concrete implementation steps, we incorporated some procedures that were included in the traditional PPP method to adapt the framework to the background of the

Chinese examination-oriented education. These steps in the localised TBLT framework form an integral system and are closely related to each other. Only in this way could the communicative teaching approach be accepted by EFL teachers and learners in China. To demonstrate the localised TBLT framework clearly and identify any deviations from classic TBLT, we will illustrate the localised framework by comparing it with Willis's (1996) framework of classic TBLT (Figure 5).



Note: LTBLT = Localised TBLT in China; CTBLT = Willis' Classic TBLT

Figure 5. Comparison of Localised TBLT framework in China and Willis's (1996) TBLT Framework

In terms of the first stage in Willis's (1996) classic TBLT, the pre-task comprises introducing the topic and task by the teacher, such as brainstorming ideas with the class. According to Halici Page and Mede (2018), the pre-task in classic TBLT focuses on meaning and is student-centred. In addition, from Willis' perspective, a task is a goal-oriented activity where students use the target language acquired from previous lessons (or in other ways) to reach a real goal (Willis,

1996). This means that foreign language learners employ what they have learned to achieve a real outcome (e.g., deal with a problem, exchange information). Willis (1996) suggests that tasks should have a distinct objective to be reached, such as creating a family tree. This would allow students to share and exchange meaning about their own family tree with other partners. Importantly, learners are given more freedom to provide more information or details about the topic. Willis (1996) also suggests that although the problems they address and the information they share may not happen in real life, using the target language is purposeful, which shall motivate language use in the real world (Willis, 1996). Hence, Willis promotes the use of real-life tasks while not excluding pedagogical tasks designed for classroom teaching. However, Willis' TBLT framework does not mention time distribution for the pre-task activities in class.

Different from Willis's classic TBLT, the pre-task of the presented localised TBLT in China is teacher-centred. In other words, the teacher prepares the tasks and presents related language elements (with new words and sentence structures involved) to students, with the aim of helping students to quickly master the structures and build up their confidence levels for the task performance. To save class time, the processes of selecting topics and notifying students about the task are completed before class. As suggested by the teachers in the case study, it would be better for instructors to select a topic from the English textbook, which can reduce the difficulty level of tasks and encourage more students to participate in task-based interactions. Moreover, to increase students' interest in vocabulary and grammar learning, teachers are advised to employ some technology-assisted tools (such as video clips and English

songs on computers) when brainstorming. Furthermore, the controlled practice of these language forms is conducted during the first step. Similar to classic TBLT, the first stage of the localised TBLT in China aims to provide an English knowledge scaffold for EFL learners to take part in subsequent task-based interactions. The time duration should be limited to 15 min for the pre-task in the localised TBLT classes, because the standard class time for middle schools is approximately 50 min in China.

Regarding the second stage of classic TBLT, the task cycle is conducted after the pre-task and comprises three steps: doing the task, planning to report, and reporting (Halici Page & Mede, 2018; Willis, 1996). Here, the teacher adopts a monitoring role in the classroom (Willis, 1996). Based on the three steps of the task cycle, the second stage of classic TBLT is still focused on meaning and is student-centred. It should be noted that Willis does not mention any concrete time duration for the task cycle.

Regarding the second stage of the localised TBLT in China, learners are initially encouraged to complete the task with group members. This might include discussing their own ideas about a problem, drawing a mind-map, or verbalising the train of thought. Second, group members interact and reach an agreement about how to report their discussion results in front of the class. Third, the teacher selects two or three groups to perform their tasks, which would be conducted either by a team representative or by some team members. Fourth, evaluators from other groups were then selected to evaluate the task performance sequentially in regard of content, grammar,

and vocabulary. Feedback from these evaluators would again help task performers to reflect on their task production, contributing to a better performance in the future.

For the task cycle in the localised TBLT, we mainly borrowed the implementation steps in Willis' classic TBLT. The most important difference between the localised TBLT and classic TBLT was that the task-based interaction time in the second phase of the localised TBLT was reduced to 15 min due to limited class time. This means that inner-group discussions about a task would require students to spend time after class preparing for the in-class task performance. Then, after reporting, a fourth step of assessment is often designed by the Chinese teachers in the task cycle. Reporting comprises one or two groups reporting in full, while others comment on or add extra points (Willis, 1996). The assessing step in the localised task cycle is different from making a comment on others' performance that is included in Willis's version of reporting. Students under the localised TBLT are asked to assess or score others' task reporting in the task cycle, to improve their higher-order thinking skills and reflect on their own performance. Therefore, the second stage of the localised TBLT is a student-centred task cycle that includes task, planning, reporting, and assessment. Finally, all the work in the task cycle of localised TBLT is completed by the students through group cooperation, which is promoted by the NECS (MOE, 2011) in China. In comparison, the task cycle in classic TBLT can be completed by students individually, in pairs, or in groups (Willis, 1996). Despite these differences, the task cycle in the localised TBLT in China is similar to classic TBLT by aiming to improve students' oral production and enhance their communicative skills in the target language. Ultimately, the

whole process is focused on meaning.

With regard to the third stage, Willis's (1996) task-based instruction highlights the importance of linguistic forms. However, the students still adopt a central role in the classroom by discovering language rules on their own. This translates as student-centred analysis and practicing grammatical points without any specific time requirements. The third stage of the localised TBLT framework is language focused, with more traditional PPP characteristics, and lasts for approximately 20 min. Usually, the presentation and practice aspects of PPP are incorporated into the language focus phase in the Chinese context. Here, the EFL teacher again comments and summarise students' task production in the task cycle regarding content, vocabulary, and grammar. Then, they act as a knowledge transmitter to conclude and present language elements used in the task performance inductively. This process focuses on the accuracy of new words and sentence structures. Subsequently, controlled practice is directed by the teacher, where the learners are asked to make phrases or sentences with new words and structures. Clearly, the third stage of the localised TBLT constitutes focus-on-form instruction and is designed with the teacher in the centre to meet the requirements of English tests in China. This renders the localised TBLT more acceptable for the Chinese EFL teachers in examination-oriented contexts. An example of the localised task-based instruction design is presented in Table 15 in Chapter 5.

In this study, we proposed a framework of localised TBLT based on the phases of classic TBLT

and teachers' suggestions on localising TBLT in China. Overall, during the three stages, classic TBLT mainly focused on meaning, with students in the centre. In comparison, localised TBLT is student-centred and meaning-focused in the task cycle, with other cycles focused on form and teacher-centred learning.

7.4 The Localised Task-Based Language Teaching Framework: A Weak Form of Task-Based Language Teaching in the Chinese Context

The localised TBLT form discovered in this study is a weak TBLT model (Ellis, 2003), which can be explained from four perspectives specific to the Chinese context: targeting tasks to examinations, selecting task materials from the textbook, placing more emphasis on the accuracy of language forms, and reducing task implementation time in class.

First, the goal of localised TBLT in China is not merely to cultivate learners' language use ability. The aim is also to improve the capacity of correct use of language structures to facilitate good performance in examinations. A similar adaptation is embodied in Carless' (2007) development of a version of TBLT in Hong Kong schools, where tasks are integrated with the requirements of examinations. According to Carless (2007), examinations are regarded as a critical factor influencing language education in the classroom. If TBLT could be related to exams, preparing for tests, and passing assessments, more teachers would engage in using

TBLT in their daily teaching, as mentioned by Carless (2007). Similarly, in China's examination-oriented education system, the efficiency of a pedagogy in improving oral performance is not as attractive as improving test scores, according to interviews with the learners and instructors in this project. Hence, the premise of developing a newly designed localised TBLT is to help teachers and learners ease misgivings that the new method may have a negative effect on examinations. Such a weakened TBLT goal is more helpful for the Chinese EFL teachers and learners accepting localised TBLT from an ideological perspective.

The weak version of the localised TBLT form in China is embodied in choosing the task materials, primarily from the textbook. According to classic TBLT theory (Willis, 1996), tasks should reflect what happens in real life. In the localised TBLT form of this study, we refer to the textbook and modify its topics to create new tasks. As mentioned by Teacher 8, this allows learners to become more familiar with knowledge items for finishing a task, limiting class time for task preparation and reducing task difficulty. The same localisation method was adopted in Thailand's weak form of TBLT reported by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007). The localised instruction design team in Thailand incorporated listening and reading material from a commercial textbook, with excerpts selected from Skyline 3.

Third, the weak form of TBLT places more emphasis on the accuracy of language forms. As displayed by Teacher 5's localised TBLT lessons, in the first step (pre-task), the presentation and practice aspects of PPP were incorporated to input new grammatical structures. In the third

step (focus-on-form), teachers again presented/concluded relevant linguistic rules to consolidate language knowledge and provided focus-on-form practice for students to master the rules correctly. All the measures were adopted through consulting the traditional PPP method to improve students' accurate use of vocabulary and structures, as suggested by Ellis (2009). This orientation is also identified in Carless's (2007) weak TBLT in Hong Kong, which emphasised the role of direct grammar instruction. It was evident in Carless's (2007) study that some teachers in Hong Kong initially preferred the PPP model for presenting and practicing the accurate use of grammar. Some informants noted that the third step (focus-on-form) should focus on remediation, error correction, or feedback of forms (Carless, 2007).

Fourth, this weakness is reflected by reducing task-based interaction time in class. Almost all the teacher participants in the current project mentioned the necessity to reduce task-based interaction time and reserve more time for traditional instruction. Therefore, in the localised TBLT framework in China, the time for the task cycle in classes was reduced to 15 min, leaving 35 min for the pre-task and focus-on-form, which were designed to center on language rules. This adaptation of TBLT is also a good way for the Chinese EFL teachers and learners to fit more effectively into the communicative approach. It should be noted that reducing task-based interaction time in class has not been reported in other Asian studies of localised TBLT, meaning it is regarded as unique to the Chinese context.

The localised TBLT framework presented in this project was weakened in four aspects to adapt

it to the Chinese context: targeting tasks to examinations, selecting task material from the textbook, placing increased emphasis on the accuracy of language forms and reducing task-based interaction time. These measures take China's education background into consideration and place greater emphasis on language forms. As reviewed and discussed previously, to fit the examination-oriented context, TBLT is weakened or localised in other Asian areas, such as Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand (Carless, 2007; Ellis, 2009; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Nevertheless, in non-examination-oriented contexts, including European and American education culture, a strong version of TBLT (classic TBLT in this study) is usually applied, based on Long M. H.'s (1985) view of tasks or Willis's (1996) TBLT theory (e.g., González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Hasan, 2014). In these studies, the whole teaching process, with *Pre-task, Task cycle* and *Focus on Form* included, is meaning-focused (Willis, 1996). In addition, learners can use whatever language materials are at their disposal to achieve a real outcome (e.g., solve a problem, complete a puzzle) without concern for form-focused language elements or the final examination scores (Willis, 1996). The detailed differences between localised TBLT in China's examination-oriented context and classic TBLT in the Anglo-American context are discussed in Figure 5.

Task-supported language teaching (TSLT) put forward by Ellis (2003) facilitates the communicative practice of linguistic elements that have been instructed in traditional methods. TSLT uses tasks to supplement traditional instruction approaches. The localised TBLT in this study is an EFL pedagogy adapted from TBLT, with certain features of traditional instruction,

considering the specific examination-oriented context in China. In this sense, both the localised TBLT in this study and TSLT are weak TBLT models. In addition, localised TBLT is the extension and development of TSLT, considering the implementation of TBLT in specific learning contexts.

7.5 The Revised Evaluation Scheme of Oral Performance

Considering the English proficiency of middle school students in China, a revised evaluation scheme of learners' oral performance was developed by adapting Bui and Skehan's (2018) measures and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement framework. Specifically, in the current study, fluency was measured by (1) the total words produced every minute and (2) the number of pauses or repetitions every minute. The two measurement items were revised from Bui and Skehan's (2018) framework for fluency, which includes speed (words or syllables every 60 seconds), breakdown fluency (the length and frequency of pauses) and repair fluency (repetition, reformulation, replacement and false starts). In terms of the first item in fluency (the total number of words per minute), we chose to measure words rather than syllables in this study, because Grade 7 students produced more single-syllable words than disyllable words or polysyllabic words. It was easier to count the words than syllables. The same measure item was also adopted in Zakeri's (2014) study, where fluency was assessed by calculating the number of words per minute. Differently, Yuan and Ellis (2003) measured the number of

syllables produced per minute, supported by Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2010) in their project to assess fluency. Regarding the second fluency measurement item (the number of pauses or repetitions every minute), it was also reported to be valid in Abdi et al.'s (2012) study, including (a) repetitions, (b) false starts, (c) reformulations and (d) replacements. In addition, the second measure of fluency also echoes Yuan and Ellis's (2003) Rate B (number of meaningful syllables, excluding syllables, words and phrases that were repeated, reformulated or replaced per minute).

Accuracy was measured by (1) the number of correct verb forms and (2) the number of error-free clauses in the current study. Each accurate use of verb forms and clauses with no errors in pronunciation, tense, aspect, etc. was counted to evaluate students' accuracy level in task-based performance. The two measures were adapted from Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement framework considering accuracy. However, the difference lies in that Yuan and Ellis (2003) assessed accuracy using the ratio of clauses and the ratio of correctly used verbs in their study. Similar to Yuan and Ellis (2003), Bui and Skehan (2018) also measured accuracy using the percentage of error-free clauses to all clauses. In this project, the reason for counting totals instead of calculating ratios of correct language forms was that student participants usually produced simple sentences and short oral performances in the pre- and post-tests. It was straightforward to determine the number of accurately used verbs and clauses in the participants' production, and the different accuracy levels could be distinguished clearly. Measuring the number of correct linguistic forms in oral performance was also adopted in Lu's

(2018) master thesis to evaluate the dimension of accuracy. Similarly, Ahangari and Abdi (2011) measured the accuracy of L2 production by counting the number of clauses and the number of grammatical errors. All mistakes related to syntax, morphology and lexical choice were considered.

Enlightened from Yuan and Ellis's (2003) CAF measurement framework, complexity was evaluated according to the syntactic complexity and syntactic variety in this study. Syntactic complexity was embodied in the number of subordinations, supporting Skehan and Foster's (1999) findings that the number of clausal subordinations is a reliable scale for assessing sensitivity in many experimental studies and is related to other complexity measures, including lexical diversity. The measure of lexical diversity mentioned in Skehan and Foster's (1999) findings and Bui and Skehan's (2018) framework was similar to syntactic variety in this study, measured by the number of different grammatical verb forms that appeared in a participant's production. Considering participants' English proficiency in Grade 7, we used third-person singular form (e.g., has, is, does, etc.) and modal verbs as the grammatical verb forms for analysis. However, in Yuan and Ellis's (2003) study, the mean segmental type–token ratio was also measured to increase the validity of the assessments. Conversely, in Ahangari and Abdi's (2011) study, the complexity of L2 oral production was assessed by the number of words per T-unit, which is regarded as comprising one independent clause together with whatever dependent clauses joined with it. The higher the number, the more complex one's oral performance.

However, the measures included in each dimension of CAF tend to assess learners' oral performance independently in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. Using different measures makes it difficult to provide a unified mark representing the speakers' overall performance (including fluency, complexity and accuracy). Therefore, in this project, we applied IELTS band descriptors for oral tests to evaluate students' overall oral production by combing with the revised measurement framework for the current study. Fortunately, The IELTS band descriptors for oral tests have a high level of fit with the measurement, and they can indicate scores for each dimension and overall oral performance. To quantise each measure included in CAF, a marking table was also developed to grade learners' oral performance based on the revised measurement framework and the revised IELTS band descriptors previously. The results of the intervention study indicated that the newly developed evaluation scheme in this study was feasible for measuring students' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity, as well as overall production. Until now, no similar method measuring CAF has been found in recent academic studies. Thus, it is unique to this project and will shed light on other researches.

7.6 Summary of Discussion and Significance of the Study

This chapter first discussed the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of task-based

instruction, as well as their suggestions of localising TBLT in an examination-oriented context. The informants perceived that TBLT tended to motivate students' EFL learning, improve engagement and reduce the fear of making mistakes when speaking English. These merits of TBLT echo the findings of Carless (2009) and Willis (1996). Moreover, the case study results reveal that the Chinese EFL teachers encountered some obstacles when implementing TBLT in the classroom, including the conflict between traditional culture and TBLT and the difficulty of implementing TBLT in large classes. The same situation also applies to Hong Kong (Carless, 2009; Tang, 2004), Japan (Harris, 2018) and Korea (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007). In actual practice, the Chinese EFL teachers either adopted TBLT at a low frequency (only in teaching skills contests or in open lectures) or in limited class time for regular teaching, which supports Carless's (2009) findings in Hong Kong. In addition, during the case study, the teachers offered some suggestions for adapting and localising the TBLT approach to China's examination-oriented culture. First, they suggested connecting TBLT with language items for examinations. This suggestion was also found in Carless's (2009) research, where some Hong Kong school teachers provided students with more grammar rules for practicing to cater for examinations during TBLT implementation. Second, the Chinese EFL teachers suggested reducing task-based interaction time in class to reserve more time for traditional teaching. This supports Willis' (1996) claim that by relying on the needs and backgrounds of language learners, the components of TBLT can be stressed in a different way. Third, the informants suggested incorporating traditional PPP methods into localised TBLT. This strategy was also reported by Ellis (2003), who suggested that tasks could offer chances to practice linguistic elements that

have been implemented in a traditional method. However, no published empirical papers were found that consider the effect of combining focus-on-form elements and traditional methods with TBLT, which became a research gap in TBLT study. To fill the gap, an intervention study was conducted in the current project to examine the effectiveness of a localised TBLT form by applying the localisation principles.

Then, this chapter discussed the effectiveness of localised TBLT on oral performance in China considering fluency, complexity and accuracy. The results of the intervention study indicated that the localised TBLT framework was more effective in improving students' overall oral production, with a medium effect size. This echoes the findings of Ercin (2019), who posited that a weak TBLT setting is only partially effective in improving task performance. However, the finding differs from Mulyadi et al.'s (2021) results, where a TBLT course had a significant influence on learners' speaking performance, with a large effect size. Specifically, there were significant improvements in fluency and complexity (with a large effect size) compared with the traditional PPP method under China's examination-oriented context. The results are similar to González-Lloret and Nielson (2015), Fang et al. (2021) and Albino's (2017) findings, with significant improvements in fluency in task-based courses, with a large effect size. In terms of complexity, the findings in this study agree with Chen J. C. C.'s (2020) results, where participants under task-based instruction exhibited a significant increase in grammatical complexity, with a large effect size. Similar results were also discovered in the research by Yaprak and Kaya (2020) and Bava Harji and Gheitanchian (2017). Nevertheless, the results of

the quantitative data indicated that improvements in accuracy were not significant after receiving localised TBLT, which contradicts the results in Chen J. C. C. (2020) and Khoram's (2019) projects, where a task-based course helped to increase linguistic accuracy significantly, with a large effect size. Therefore, some language-focused activities after the localised TBLT lessons are put forward to bridge this gap, such as self-repairs and peer corrections.

Subsequently, based on the teacher participants' suggestions for localising TBLT in the case study (including targeting language items for examinations, reducing task-based interaction time in class and incorporating traditional approaches into localised TBLT) and the positive effects of localised TBLT in the intervention study on oral performance, a possible localised TBLT framework was put forward. Similar to Willis's (1996) classic TBLT framework, the developed localised TBLT framework involves three phases: pre-task, task cycle and focus-on-form. However, the specific implementation process and learning focus of each stage in the localised TBLT framework differ from those in Willis' TBLT framework. To demonstrate the localised TBLT framework clearly and identify any deviations from classic TBLT, we illustrated the localised framework by comparing it with Willis's (1996) framework of classic TBLT. Overall, during the three stages, classic TBLT mainly focused on meaning, with students at the centre. In comparison, localised TBLT is student-centred and meaning-focused in the task cycle, with other cycles focused on form and teacher-centred learning to fit the needs of examination-oriented education culture.

In addition, the localised TBLT form discovered in this study is a weak TBLT model (Ellis, 2003) with four features: (1) targeting tasks to examinations, (2) selecting task materials from the textbook, (3) placing more emphasis on the accuracy of language forms and (4) reducing task implementation time in class. Targeting tasks to examinations and putting greater emphasis on the accuracy of language forms are also identified in Carless' (2007) weak TBLT in Hong Kong. In addition, the localisation method of choosing the task materials from the textbook was adopted in Thailand's weak form of TBLT reported by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007). Lastly and uniquely, the localised TBLT model is weakened through reducing task-based interaction time in class, which has not been reported in other studies considering TBLT localisation.

Finally, a newly developed evaluation scheme was elaborated and discussed by comparing with other studies in measuring fluency, accuracy and complexity. The revised measurement framework was adapted from Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measures. New band descriptors were created by combining the new measures and IELTS band descriptors for oral tests. Then, to grade student participants' oral performance in each dimension, a marking table was created accordingly. No similar measuring method considering CAF has been found in published papers recently.

Therefore, this study shows great importance in expanding localised TBLT literature, benefiting EFL teaching in China, and contributing to the CAF measurements. The creation of

a localised task-based instruction framework shows the feasibility that TBLT can be adapted and modified to examination-oriented contexts. On examination, it was considered effective for improving students' oral performance, specifically in terms of fluency and complexity. This was accomplished by incorporating some localisation methods, such as adding focus-on-form elements, applying focused tasks and targeting tasks at examinations. Thus, this study diversifies TBLT research findings into localisation studies, so as to expand TBLT literature and shed light on localised TBLT studies in other similar contexts. In addition, this project may positively influence EFL teaching in China. The current study meets the current trend in foreign language teaching by developing suitable task designs and an adaptive TBLT and experimenting with effective implementation forms under Chinese socio-cultural context. Both EFL teachers and learners in China can benefit from the localised TBLT framework in improving students' language use skills. Furthermore, the evaluation scheme used in this study (with a measurement framework, revised IELTS band descriptors for oral tests, and a marking table included) can shed light on other studies considering CAF.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This part concerns the conclusions of the research process and major findings of the case study and intervention study. Subsequently, implications and limitations of the current research are presented to shed light on future research.

8.1 Overview of the Research Process

This study mainly experienced four stages of data collection: a case study, a pilot study, an intervention study and an overall interpretation. The case study includes interviews with teacher participants and classroom observations to know how the Chinese EFL teachers understand and practice TBLT in examination-oriented contexts, to develop ideas for localising TBLT in China for the subsequent pilot study and intervention study. Then, based on the findings of the case study, localised TBLT and traditional instruction designs were piloted, aimed at providing appropriate intervention methods for the experimental group and control group. After the pilot study, an intervention study with pre-and post-tests was conducted to test the efficiency of localised TBLT on oral performance by comparing it with the traditional instruction approach. In the end, an overall interpretation of the research findings was made.

To start, we conducted a case study with eight EFL teachers in Shijiazhuang City, China, by interviewing and observing their teaching processes. The teacher participants, with rich

teaching experience in task-based instruction, were from three different schools to ensure the broadness of the qualitative information. The interview questions concerned three sub-themes: 1) what understandings EFL teachers in China have of task-based instruction in terms of its practice and implications in teaching and learning, 2) the extent to which they claim to apply the principles and practices of TBLT in their teaching practice and 3) their opinions of localising TBLT in China. After the interviews, the teacher participants' teaching processes were observed to gain more evidences of localisation in task-based instruction in China and provide references for designing a localised TBLT framework. Qualitative data obtained from the case study was analysed using the grounded theory approach, including three steps—creating open codes, axial coding and thematic coding—to summarise the main themes concerning teachers' perceptions and practices of TBLT in China.

In the second stage, after the generalising principles of localising TBTL in China were identified from teachers' practices and suggestions concerning TBLT localisation in the case study, we piloted two instruction design samples (a localised TBLT instruction design and a traditional instruction design) with the help of Teacher 5 in School C. Two natural classes attended the pilot study, receiving the localised TBLT and traditional instruction methods, respectively, as directed by Teacher 5, to guarantee the reliability of the influence of students' familiarity with the learning content. The results show that both forms are feasible for the following intervention study.

Then, the intervention study, lasting for 15 weeks, aimed to examine the efficiency of the localised TBLT form on oral performance, considering fluency, accuracy and complexity. In total, 101 students (94 were valid for data analysis) from School B and Teacher 5 participated in the intervention, mainly via three steps: pre-test, intervention and post-test.

The pre-test was done to ensure the two groups' oral performances were at a similar level. Descriptive data collected during the pre-test were also used to analyse improvements (pre-post difference) in learners' oral products after the intervention. The pre-test took the form of the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET), reported in Mohammadipour and Rashid's (2015) research. It took around 10 minutes to finish the test with the students.

Regarding the intervention study, the teaching materials were the same, selected from the PEP textbook for Grade Seven. Teacher 5 taught the experimental group using the localised TBLT method and the control group using a traditional approach. The intervention was conducted three times a week, each for 50 minutes. Based on the instruction design forms piloted in the second stage, the localised TBLT instruction designs were cooperatively created by the researcher and another doctoral student majoring in English language education. The researcher and teacher participant (Teacher 5) collaboratively designed the traditional instruction lessons.

After the intervention, a post-test for students was conducted in the form of PET for the purpose

of analysing learners' improvements in their oral products. Similar to the pre-test, it took nearly 10 minutes for each student to finish the test.

Concerning how to measure students' pre-and post-tests performances, we adapted Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement schemes, as well as IELTS band descriptors for oral testing, to create a new evaluation scheme suited for Grade 7 learners. Such dimensions as the fluency, accuracy and complexity of the oral product were measured in this study. To ensure the reliability of the measurement results, the writer and a middle school teacher participated in the evaluation. Then, pre-and post-tests scores were analysed using independent samples *t*-tests. Alpha was set at .05 for achieving statistical significance. Furthermore, Cohen's *d* was also used to test the effect size.

The fourth stage concerns the overall interpretation and an in-depth discussion of the research findings. The Chinese EFL teachers' understandings, practices and suggestions of localising TBLT in an examination-oriented context were discussed at first. We further illustrated the effects of the localised TBLT form on the fluency, accuracy and complexity of their oral performances, discussed the formation mechanism behind and compared the results of this project with findings discovered in other studies. Then, the framework of localised TBLT in China was concluded and discussed. To clarify the localised TBLT form created in this study, a comparison of localised TBLT with classic TBLT and the traditional instruction approach was conducted in terms of implementation phases, learning content and learning objectives. In

addition, considering the effectiveness of localised TBLT and China's examination-oriented education system, the weak features of the localised TBLT framework were further discussed.

In conclusion, this part overviews the research process in general. Qualitative data provided enough evidence of the localised TBLT form in China, whose efficiency was then examined through an experimental study. The main research findings and answers to the research questions are further illustrated in the next section.

8.2 Summary of the Major Findings

In the Chinese background of an examination-oriented culture and given the current TBLT implementation status, this study aimed to create a localised TBLT framework suitable for the Chinese context that can improve EFL students' oral performance (CAF) in China. To achieve the research purpose, the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practices related to TBLT in China were revealed through interviews and classroom observations in a case study. In addition, a localised TBLT instruction design based on the findings in the case study was piloted and then examined in the intervention study. Finally, a possible localised TBLT framework that would have a positive influence on the Chinese EFL students' oral performance was presented.

According to the results of the interviews and classroom observations in the case study, the

Chinese EFL teachers' understandings of the advantages and obstacles involved in TBLT implementation, as well as their suggestions on localising TBLT in China, were identified in accordance with the first research question. Three advantages of TBLT were summarised from the information provided by the informants. The first was an increase in students' EFL learning interest and motivation, which could be due to the 'fun' and 'interesting' aspects of tasks. The second was that task-based interactions encouraged more students to be involved in EFL learning, with lower-level students helped by advanced students and mutual help between students during communication. Third, the teacher participants mentioned that TBLT tended to alleviate students' fear of mistakes, which might be a direct result of the focus-on-meaning principle.

However, some challenges emerged when promoting communicative TBLT in China. Almost all participants mentioned the negative effect of China's examination-oriented culture on TBLT implementation. Examination results are highly valued by teachers, students, and parents in China. However, the examination content could not be reflected fully in task-based instruction, which stopped teachers from selecting communicative pedagogy in daily teaching (Teacher 3). Further, students were accustomed to 'passive' teaching approaches, rendering it hard for them to adapt to the more flexible classroom in TBLT (Teacher 6). Thus, there was a conflict between China's examination culture and the communicative TBLT approach. Moreover, all teacher participants concurred that large class sizes presented a significant challenge when implementing TBLT in the classroom. This manifested as difficulties in managing classroom

order (Teacher 7) and addressing student needs in various situations (Teacher 5).

Influenced by the obstacles to implementing TBLT in China, the teachers either adopted TBLT rarely or reduced implementation time in actual practice. The informants in this study also provided some suggestions about localising TBLT in China's examination-oriented culture. These included connecting topics of TBLT with language items for examinations to save task preparation time and reduce task difficulty levels, reducing task-based interaction time in class to reserve more time for traditional teaching, and incorporating traditional PPP phases into the localised TBLT design to address examination requirements.

In response to the second research question, a localised TBLT instruction design based on the findings in the case study was piloted and then examined to show its effectiveness in improving students' oral performance in terms of CAF. The overall results indicated that the localised TBLT had a good-medium effect on overall oral performance. Specifically, the results revealed a significant and large improvement in the localised TBLT group in terms of fluency and complexity. The research results in this study concur with the findings in the literature review (e.g., Hasan, 2014; Lan et al., 2016; González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Mulyadi et al., 2021) in that a large effect size was achieved in the effectiveness of TBLT on oral performance, especially on fluency and complexity. This means that students who received the localised TBLT could speak English more fluently by using more words per minute, with fewer self-corrections/repetitions compared to those in the traditional instruction group. Furthermore, the

localised TBLT was more helpful in motivating learners to use subordinations and different grammatical verb forms, improving complexity in the target language.

The intervention study findings revealed that although there was a slight promotion in accuracy using the localised TBLT method, it did not outperform traditional instruction. Therefore, some language-focused activities after the localised TBLT lessons are suggested to bridge this gap, such as self-repair and peer corrections. Therefore, it would be safe to suggest that the localised TBLT form in this study is more efficient in promoting learners' speaking performance, especially in regard of fluency and complexity.

In response to the third research question, a possible localised TBLT framework suitable for China's examination-oriented context was discussed and identified through comparisons with Willis' classic TBLT framework and localised TBLT forms in other Asian areas. Three stages were conducted in the localised TBLT framework for China. In the pre-task phase, there was a focus-on-form and teacher-centred introduction to the topics by referring to the presentation and practice steps of traditional PPP approaches. Moreover, grammar and structure were emphasised to scaffold task performance and build student confidence. In the task cycle phase, we used Willis' TBLT framework as the primary reference with students and meaning in the centre, including doing the task, planning, and reporting. After reporting, a fourth step (inter-group 'assessing') was added to the task cycle within the localised TBLT framework. This was included to help students know the criteria for good outcomes and reflect on their own

performance. In the focus-on-form stage, teacher-centred and focus-on-form activities were conducted to consolidate learners' accurate use of grammar and structures by consulting the presentation and practice elements of the PPP method.

The localised TBLT phases took China's examination-oriented context into consideration and incorporated more opportunities for grammar and structure learning. In terms of task types in the localised TBLT framework, task materials were selected from the textbook to reduce task preparation time and task difficulty levels. Choosing tasks based on the needs of specific areas was also identified in Korea's localised TBLT form (Kim et al., 2017) and Thai's localised TBLT courses (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007).

8.3 Implications and Limitations of the Study

The localised TBLT framework explored in this project provides some implications for the Chinese EFL teachers, students and schools, as well as for language policy makers to improve EFL education in China's examination-oriented context. In addition, the revised measurement framework of oral performance in this study also sheds light on the evaluation of CAF in the future. Admittedly, limited by the research sites, number of participants and ability of the writer, there are some potential TBLT areas to be investigated in the future.

8.3.1 Implications

In this study, we examined teaching practice for the Chinese EFL teachers and added empirical evidence to support them in adopting a TBLT approach to improve their students' oral proficiency. Furthermore, it is recommended that EFL instructors apply the localised TBLT framework to improve students' oral performance. Since textbook-based tasks can reduce the preparation time and task difficulty levels found in the case study, EFL teachers in China should choose a task by adapting a communicative activity in the textbook. In actual practice, based on the localised TBLT framework presented in the herein study, it is suggested that EFL instructors limit task-based interaction time in class (e.g., limit task cycle time to 15 min) and reserve more time in class for grammar teaching (e.g., increase time for the pre-task and focus-on-form stages) in a standard class of 50 min. In addition, considering that both teachers and students in China are accustomed to teacher-centred classrooms that emphasise knowledge transmission, the Chinese EFL teachers may incorporate traditional PPP approaches into task-based instruction (e.g., adopt presentation and practice in the pre-task and focus-on-form stages) when appropriate. It is reported that many EFL teachers in China are confused about how to adopt the TBLT noted in the NECS (MOE, 2001; 2011) to improve students' language use ability and increase their exam scores simultaneously. The localised TBLT framework in this study provided clear guidance for them to apply task-based instruction in their daily teaching.

The localised TBLT framework in China may contribute to the implementation of TBLT in

large classes. This intervention study was conducted based on the general education context of China, where big class sizes are the reality for most classroom teaching. Given that a smaller class size is more typical in classic TBLT to carry out communicative instruction (Willis, 1996), the teacher participants in the case study mentioned that it was difficult to conduct TBLT in large classes. This is the reason why we tried to implement a localisation study of TBLT in China to find out the feasibility of conducting TBLT with large-sized classes. In this sense, the localised TBLT framework proposed in this study may contribute to the implementation of TBLT in large-sized classes. However, whether this localized TBLT could be effective with small-sized classes should be investigated. Therefore, in the future, an intervention study can be conducted to investigate how suitable this localised TBLT can be applied to small-sized classes and compare the results with those of large-sized classes.

In the localised TBLT framework, students are asked to do the task, plan the report, report the task, and evaluate others' performance, which provides good guidance for students to learn English by themselves. Therefore, this framework can also nurture students in foreign language learning and help them improve their self-regulation abilities. In the localised TBLT approach, the tasks should be completed through group work and interpersonal communication, which offers a chance for learners to share ideas in EFL learning. Furthermore, form and content are two aspects for assessing others' performance in the task cycle, contributing to the ability of self-reflection. Moreover, being test-designers in after-class follow-ups could benefit students in finding out language rules on their own.

This study generated empirical evidence to support schools in upgrading their teaching evaluation systems. Previously, teachers' teaching skills were only evaluated by checking students' performance in examinations, without any consideration of instructors' teaching methods. The NECS (MOE, 2011) noted:

> In order to improve learners' capacity to 'do things in English', instructors should help students achieve the goal by creating various contexts close to real life, adopting gradual language practice activities, and methods stressing both process and results, like TBLT (p. 20).

Therefore, successfully conducting a localised TBLT approach to improve students' language use abilities and accuracy in mastering language forms should become a criterion for evaluating teaching skills. Accordingly, the framework presented in this study provides a reference for schools to assess instructors' teaching skills in terms of the TBLT method in China.

The localised TBLT framework could also provide references for the Ministry of China (MOE) to compile the NECS every 10 years. Although communicative TBLT is highly recommended in government documents, there are no concrete teaching examples with detailed procedures for conducting TBLT in China. Moreover, most EFL teachers do not know how to apply it in daily teaching. Furthermore, even though the NECS encourages teachers to use task-based instruction, some teachers doubt its efficiency under China's examination-oriented context. Therefore, the presented localised TBLT framework, with concrete teaching steps and a

positive influence on oral production, could enrich the content of the NECS. For example, some localisation principles could be mentioned in the NECS document, including selecting task materials from the textbook, reducing task-based interaction time, and incorporating traditional methods into TBLT.

Moreover, the localised TBLT framework adopted in this study poses a solution to the education policy of 'Double Reduction' in China, which means reducing students' workload and reducing child extracurricular education training (especially for subjects training, such as English), put forward by the General Office of the State Council in China (2021). During the writing process of the thesis, the issue of educational equity was once again extensively discussed at the whole society level in mainland China, and it has already triggered great changes at the policy level. Owing to the high entry threshold to top universities in China and the direct impact of extracurricular tutoring on students' examination performance, the high cost of education has become a major burden and source of anxiety for most families, which is threatening the bottom line of educational equity in China. This anxiety has directly influenced the fertility rate. Under the combined effects of housing prices, education and medical care, the birth population in mainland China was only 12 million in 2020, decreasing to 10.62 million in 2021 (Bureau of Statistics, 2021). To curb the further exacerbation of the fertility rate, the Chinese government adopted some policies in the fields of real estate, education and medical care in the second half of 2021.

In the field of education, the Ministry of Education enacted the policy of 'Double Reduction' and directly shut down or rectified all extracurricular cram schools nationwide. At present, in addition to private one-on-one counselling, training institutions have been expressly prohibited from providing remedial services to primary and secondary school students in any form. That is, most students have no English learning channels other than classrooms. On the one hand, the 'Double Reduction' policy helps students reduce the homework burden. On the other, it gives the schools a responsibility to improve students' language use ability, while simultaneously learning language forms. If middle schools cannot effectively improve students' language use skills, there is no way for EFL learners in China to improve their speaking level. In this event, the localised TBLT framework developed in this study, which was examined to be efficient in enhancing students' oral performance, enables middle schools to cope with the 'Double Reduction' policy. The localised TBLT method provides some directions for designing after-school activities, which can help improve students' language use ability, as well as reduce the workload outside the classroom.

Globally, the localised TBLT framework under China's examination-oriented context may provide references for TBLT localisation studies in other countries, such as Korea and Thailand. Due to the positive effects of task-based instruction on learning outcomes, with a medium-to-large effect size reviewed in the literature review, TBLT has been adopted in EFL teaching around the world, including in Asian areas (e.g., Leaver & Kaplan, 2004; Macías, 2004; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; M. Park, 2012). Just as Butler (2011) determined, it is

necessary to promote TBLT from 'adoption to adaptation' to suit better local language learning needs and cultural contexts. To fit the different cultures, TBLT was adapted in Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand (Carless, 2007; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Kim et al., 2017) with some localisation methods reported in their studies: adding focus-on-form elements to task processes, localising tasks based on the specific needs of stakeholders in that particular context and applying focused tasks. However, no evidence of the effectiveness of the localisation methods on any specific learning outcome was provided, and no localisation TBLT framework was developed in these studies. The localised TBLT framework in this project, based on mainland China's education background, attempts to localise TBLT from the aspects of choosing suitable topics and adapting specific teaching procedures, and it is soon to be examined in terms of CAF. Accordingly, it should be a suitable pedagogy for EFL education in China, providing references for TBLT localisation studies. Although there has been no evidence to show its effects on learning outcomes in other countries/regions, the localisation methods used in the current study (such as connecting task-based instruction with language items for examinations, reducing task-based interaction time and incorporating traditional methods in classic TBLT) can provide references for localised TBLT studies in other similar contexts, such as those in the east Asian region with similar learning cultures.

In addition, this study puts forward a revised CAF evaluation scheme and a marking table, which may contribute to measuring overall complexity, accuracy and fluency. Previous research studies used different scales to measure fluency, complexity and accuracy (Skehan,

1996a; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010; Yuan & Ellis, 2003; Bui, 2018). It is argued that the three areas are measured with scales that are somewhat independent from one another (Bui & Skehan, 2018). For example, in Ahmadian and Tavakoli's (2010) measurement of variables, accuracy is measured by the percentage of correct verb forms and percentage of error-free clauses. However, fluency is measured by counting the syllables produced per minute and counting meaningful syllables per minute. Yuan and Ellis (2003) measured complexity using 'the ratio of clauses to T-units in oral production' and 'the total number of different grammatical verb forms in the task'. Using different measures, it is hard to provide a unified mark representing the speakers' overall performance that includes fluency, complexity and accuracy. Therefore, the revised evaluation scheme and marking table in the current study, based on Bui and Skehan (2018) and Yuan and Ellis's (2003) measurement frameworks, as well as the IELTS band descriptors, provide the possibility of measuring overall fluency, complexity and accuracy to middle school EFL learners.

In summary, this study highlights the Chinese EFL teachers' teaching practice and students' language learning, as well as the implementation of TBLT in large classes. It also provides some references for schools to upgrade their teaching evaluation systems and for the MOE to enrich the NECS document. Moreover, the revised measurement framework and marking table, by referring to IELTS band descriptors, contribute to the CAF evaluation as a whole for learners with lower-level proficiency. In addition, the localised TBLT framework poses a solution to the education policy of 'Double Reduction' in China and provides references for TBLT localisation

studies in other Asian areas.

8.3.2 Limitations

This project was situated in a city of China, and the localised TBLT form was only tested to be efficient in improving oral performance in that area. Unfortunately, due to practical constraints, it is impossible to expand the application of the localised TBLT method to other parts of China. Therefore, it would be necessary in future studies to examine the effectiveness of localised TBLT in other districts of China.

Moreover, the dependent variable of this study focused on oral performance, which may be reflected in the final test scores. However, within the scope of this doctoral research, it was impossible to collect such data (unforbidden by the school) to examine the influence of the localised TBLT on raising final examination scores. Although excessive emphasis on test scores has been criticised by experts and the Chinese government, the reality is that examination marks are very relevant for many students who desire a good education in the future under the examination-oriented context, as indicated by Teacher 4. Since TBLT is a communicative approach that emphasises meaning exchange and interpersonal interactions, it is vital to study its influence on oral tests. However, in future studies, research questions should focus on the effectiveness of localised TBLT on English tests involving listening, reading, and writing. In addition, 8 EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT cannot reflect the views of all

teachers in China, which could limit the generalisability of the research results. Therefore, further studies with a larger sample size are necessary to validate the findings of this doctoral dissertation.

Another limitation is that this study did not carry out an intervention to compare the effects of classic TBLT with the localised TBLT form on oral performance. Even though the teacher participants in China do not usually conduct classic TBLT in daily teaching and that they perceive task-based instruction is in conflict with the examination culture discovered in the current study, there is still no empirical evidence to show the incompatibility between classic TBLT and examination-oriented contexts. Therefore, to examine the effectiveness of a strong version of TBLT in exam-oriented contexts can be a future direction in TBLT studies.

The localised TBLT method developed in this project has certain requirements concerning EFL teachers' English proficiency. The teachers should know how to design a task with a proper difficulty level suitable for most students in one class. Furthermore, the instructor should be able to use English fluently and correctly. At present, many Chinese EFL teachers do not meet the above requirements. Some even have a low willingness to accept the communicative TBLT method, according to the data obtained from the informal interviews with teachers in the case study. Despite the limitations of some instructor' English proficiency for conducting task-based instruction, the localised TBLT method is still worth promoting. The original purpose of this project was to determine whether there was a possibility of localising TBLT in an examination-

oriented context, rather than using it as a one-size-fits-all solution. More follow-ups and further studies are needed to examine the effectiveness of localised TBLT, as mentioned.

In addition, EFL education in China is developing rapidly, and factors contributing to the implementation of TBLT are emerging. First, the 'Double Reduction' education policy was introduced to reduce as much as possible the proportion of examinations at the stage of compulsory education. Although there has not yet been a fundamental turn in China's education culture, the policy does provide an opportunity for EFL learning to move from examination-oriented to language use-focused. Second, the share of EFL teachers in China has undergone a qualitative change. According to 'Number of Full-time Teachers in Junior Secondary Schools by Subject Taught & Educational Flush' released by the Ministry of Education in 2021, there are 608,720 full-time middle school English teachers in China. Among them, 29,946 are postgraduates, accounting for 4.92% of the total, and 531,582 undergraduates, accounting for 87.33%. This means the vast majority of junior middle school English teachers in China have a bachelor's degree or above, and this proportion is still expanding rapidly. Benefitting from the emphasis on language use and the continuous innovation of teaching methods in higher education, most new teachers have a good speaking performance and a positive attitude towards the communicative TBLT method, as shown in the interview data. This presents a great opportunity to promote the localised TBLT approach in China.

In summary, some directions are provided for future research. First, the effectiveness of the

localised TBLT form should be examined in other districts of China. Second, future research should focus on the effectiveness of the localised TBLT framework on listening, reading or writing. Third, comparing the effectiveness of the localised TBLT model with classic TBLT in exam-oriented contexts can be another future direction.

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