
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Classroom Roles, and Implementation Challenges in Kuwaiti Higher Education

Sara Alajmi

School of Literature and Languages, University of Reading, Reading, UK

Corresponding Author: Sara Alajmi **E-mail:** sarafalajmii@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

While there is a growing body of literature on communicative language teaching, many students who enter the higher education in Kuwait seem to have poor command of the English language, necessitating teaching and learning methods that facilitate meaningful language use for communication. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has often been widely recognized as effective in fostering tasks of communicative competence and interaction for learning, but little is understood about the perceptions of Kuwaiti higher education teachers towards its application. This mixed-methods study investigated Kuwaiti EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT and the barriers they encountered during its implementation. Results suggested that most teachers found TBLT to be beneficial for supporting communicative competence, collaboration and interaction in class; however, some of these positive perceptions were offset by concerns about its practicability in the context of examinations and institutional constraints. The main barriers reported by teachers were mismatch between assessment practices and TBLT principles, rigid curriculum, large class sizes, and student resistance to learner-centered approaches. This paper reveals how Kuwaiti teachers struggle with applying TBLT in an institutional context of conflicting pedagogical ideals.

| KEYWORDS

Task-based Language Teaching, EFL Teachers' Perceptions, Higher Education, Kuwait.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 10 June 2026

PUBLISHED: 11 July 2026

DOI: 10.32996/bjtep.2026.5.8.1

1. Introduction

Even after years of formal foreign language education, students who study in the Kuwaiti public universities frequently display underdeveloped communicative competence and inadequate communicative skills in English, especially in productive skills such as speaking and using the language appropriately in real-life situations (Fatima & Al Qenai, 2021). Such discrepancy has called into question the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques in meeting the communicative needs. Many Kuwaiti classrooms still adopt conventional and teacher-centered grammar-based methods, together with exam-focused assessment, which is inconsistent with the communicative needs of the university students (Fatima & Al Qenai, 2021; Alshuraiaan & Almfefleh, 2023). Thus, there has been increasing interest in adopting methods which incorporate meaningful language use, taking into consideration the constraints of the local context.

Others such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have gained a place because they are rooted in a more holistic and meaningful view of language learning by focusing on the meaningful use of language in authentic communication tasks rather than on the isolated teaching of grammatical forms (Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Long, 1985). Based on one of the hypotheses widely accepted in current SLA research - the Interaction Hypothesis - TBLT presumes that language develops through interaction and negotiation of meaning while task-based frameworks imply that language learning takes place when completing truly functional communicative tasks (Long, 1996). Despite the abundance of positive research results attributing to TBLT a more motivated learning and higher levels of communicative competence, the application of its principles in class remains dependent on the educational setting in which they are used. In a system geared towards examination and governed by predefined curricula,

teacher-centered approaches and diminishing instructional flexibility, operationalizing the principles of TBLT may not be straightforward.

These contextual issues are particularly salient in Kuwait, where communicative approaches have been gaining ground as a supplement to the more traditional approaches to instruction (Almefleh et al., 2023; Al-Senafi & Al-Haji, 2023). Although the existing Kuwaiti studies have yielded positive findings with respect to communicative and task-based instruction, the particular focus of much of this research has been on the efficacy of these approaches for instruction or curriculum development and not on (Kuwaiti) teachers' perspectives on the practical application of TBLT in the classroom. Little is therefore currently understood about how EFL university instructors in Kuwait perceive the viability of TBLT, the contextual underpinnings of its application, and the institutional and classroom barriers to its implementation.

Despite the general consensus that TBLT is a communicative approach appropriate for encouraging meaningful language learning, the actual application will vary according to the way teachers interpret and adapt the principles of this approach within their institutional setting. As a result, the perceptions held by teachers are important as they can shape the way new instructional techniques are implemented, modified, or even hindered in practice. Research that reveals the perceptions of EFL teachers about the feasibility of using TBLT and the institutional and classroom constraints they face is sparse. Therefore, this study investigates EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the feasibility of applying TBLT and the constraints experienced by English teachers in Kuwaiti higher education. This investigation offers context-specific evidence to supplement the relatively sparse evidence available in the literature on the application of TBLT in examination-oriented EFL contexts, and extends knowledge about institutional factors influencing the implementation of communicative language teaching.

2. Literature Review

The success of the implementation of TBLT is not only determined by the underpinning philosophies but also by the way that these are interpreted, negotiated and operationalized by teachers in given contexts. While TBLT is largely associated with a communicative, learner-centered approach, the implementation of TBLT in classrooms involves a significant departure in the role of teachers, learner activities and classroom practices. The latter are of particular importance to EFL contexts, where the teacher-centered approach traditionally adopted, assessment requirements and institutional expectations may have a bearing on teachers' perceptions of TBLT. For the reasons outlined above, this paper will review the theoretical basis and conceptual evolution of TBLT, teachers' perceptions of this and the contextual factors involved in the classroom implementation of TBLT in the EFL context, with a view to higher education.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of TBLT

Different theoretical views of language learning help elucidate why TBLT can be more successful in some classrooms than in others. For instance, the Interaction Hypothesis and Sociocultural Theory (SCT) have different perspectives on the pattern of language learning within a classroom, leading to contrasting beliefs about the roles of teachers and learners in applying task-based instruction and how TBLT tasks should be carried out (Long, 1996; Fahim & Haghani, 2012). The former stresses the role of negotiation of meaning for development, while the latter stresses the importance of social mediation and role of the teacher to aid learning (Long, 1996; Fahim & Haghani, 2012). It is relevant to address these two since both have implications for how teachers might see TBLT: teachers must balance direct instruction for learning with task focus and interaction for classroom success.

According to the Interaction Hypothesis, TBLT requires meaningful communication, whereby learners acquire language through interaction processes like clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetition, etc. (Astika, 2025). This theory accounts for TBLT's focus on communicative tasks and speaking development through real-time language processing (Long, 1996). Nonetheless, this presumption may be problematic in low-level EFL classrooms where learners may not have enough linguistic resources or confidence to sustain successful interaction, thus teachers may find task-based activities hard to manage or ineffective in classrooms when learners cannot work on them independently. SCT considers interaction as an element of general cognitive development, emphasizing collaborative knowledge construction and a facilitator role for teachers, who make use of scaffolding techniques (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). SCT corresponds to the TBLT expectation for teacher-guided tasks rather than authority over the transmission of knowledge; however, lack of teacher training in scaffolding strategies can limit teachers' successful performance as facilitators.

The discrepancy between these theoretical frameworks has pedagogical implications for the use of TBLT. While interactionist theories have the potential to lead teachers to focus more on fluency, negotiation of meaning, and learner autonomy, SCT's sociocultural views of guidance and collaborative work tend to argue for the use of scaffolded help and carefully orchestrated classroom activities (Long, 1996; Fahim & Haghani, 2012). While the SCT theory would seem to be a good fit for educational

environments where teachers traditionally dominate classroom settings, it is not clear that this theory will be able to alleviate implementation challenges. Aljasir (2024), discussing Arab Gulf classroom settings, shares the notion that tradition (in this case, teacher authority) could help lead to TBLT implementation, but this reflects assumptions about the attitude of teachers about giving up their authority, in which case teachers' buy-in to the TBLT will vary based on their sense of classroom control and their notion of what they need to prepare themselves to teach in a different way. Thus, while scaffolding techniques could prove to be a culturally relevant way of leading toward implementation, a lack of training and preexisting hierarchies may continue to influence the uptake of this approach.

2.2 From Communicative Language Teaching to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT developed from the ideas of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), designed to translate the goal of communication into a structured task-based learning experience (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Although CLT established genuine communication as the ultimate goal of language teaching, TBLT aimed to clarify the direction of reaching that goal through the tasks (Littlewood, 2007; Long, 1985). The connection between language and meaningful activity has positioned communication as a learning process and as a learning outcome (Prabhu, 1987). This formal organization of the tasks have led to a continuing tension between the maintenance of truly communicative use of language and the organization of the classroom as intervention tasks may become more like work, business or formal learning and less like authentic use of language. The values and beliefs evoked by these tensions will resonate profoundly with teachers as much as their understanding of what a good task is, as this will shape the extent to which TBLT is implemented, modified, or used within the classroom.

Long's (1991) Focus on Form is one attempt to overcome this tension, as it points toward ways in which grammatical features could be emphasized without losing the focus on meaning and communication (Crookes & Gass, 1993; Long, 1991). This emphasis on meaning does not exclude grammatical instruction, but rather gives teachers the opportunity to be flexible and cater to learners' needs within the context of communicative tasks. The only caveat is the pedagogical awareness that teachers must have in order to appropriately balance communication and accuracy, which may also influence their attitudes toward TBLT.

In TBLT literature, definition of "task" is not uniform, leading to varying conceptions about what constitutes successful implementation. For instance, although Long (1985) emphasizes real-world authenticity in his definition, activities that are representative of what people do in daily life Skehan (1998) offers a more structured definition that incorporates four criteria centered on meaning and tasks, meaning, goals, and task conditions. The present study adopts Skehan (1998), as this more explicit set of criteria can serve as a useful standard in verifying teachers' conceptualization of the meaning- and goal-oriented qualities of TBLT tasks. While such a standardized formulation of what constitutes a task can help to facilitate the adoption of TBLT tasks, differences in distinct task definitions may potentially confuse teachers and contribute to hybrid tasks that become individual activities following grammatical lessons. As such, the teachers' understanding of TBLT will be examined in relation to classroom practice.

2.3 Teacher Perceptions of TBLT and Implementation Challenges

Findings from research in various EFL settings show that teachers generally acknowledge the advantages of TBLT in encouraging meaningful communication and engaging learners with (Aljasir, 2024; Saputro et al., 2021). Nevertheless, being positive about TBLT does not necessarily mean teachers are willing to implement it into their classes. As mentioned above, teachers' implementation of TBLT also depends on such contextual factors as the educational, institutional and cultural settings, and teachers will probably be more reluctant to adopt the approach in an environment where the emphasis is on textbook-driven, grammar-focused, examination-oriented instruction. However, in the research literature, there is little evidence to show the extent to which the influence of contextual factors, if there are any, could override teachers' apprehension about adopting the TBLT approach.

In Arab and Gulf contexts, Aljasir (2024) notes that teachers think that learner-centered approaches are useful but still encounter difficulties shifting away from teacher-centered approaches. This implies that the implementation of TBLT is not only about teachers' familiarity with it but also involves changes in classroom roles, expectations, and beliefs about effective teaching practices. When teachers who are seen as being responsible for transmitting knowledge have to adopt the role of a facilitator in the classroom, they may have concerns about classroom management, authority and participation that influence their attitudes towards TBLT. Although there has been a growing interest in these approaches, there is so far little research investigating teachers' perceptions of how they implement TBLT in Arab higher education contexts. More research is needed to explore how teachers interpret TBLT, reposition themselves in their classrooms, and cope with the contextual forces that challenge TBLT practice.

2.4 Implementing TBLT in EFL Contexts: Teacher Roles, Constraints, and Classroom Realities

In spite of the favorable attitudes towards TBLT, there are significant challenges and constraints of implementation, such as changes in classroom practices, the roles of teachers and the learners' expectations of language learning. These challenges can be summarized into three interacting categories: constraints on the teachers; constraints on the learners; and institutional factors. Concerns on the teachers are especially relevant as TBLT calls for teachers to embrace a shift from traditional knowledge-provider teachers to a more facilitative role with the responsibilities of managing interaction and scaffolding. However, teachers' possible worries on the loss of control of the classroom and authority may influence their acceptance of these new roles and responsibility (Carless, 2007; Taiba, et. Al, 2020). Likewise, students' recognition of ability and readiness as well as learners' gain of independence may impact their teachers' attitude toward the practicability of real task-based activities which are different from conventional teacher-directed education (McAllister et al., 2012; Tabatabaei & Hadi, 2011). Furthermore, institutional factors such as large classes, curriculum obligations and the focus on test preparation may hinder teachers' sustained implementation of TBLT (Liu & Ren, 2021).

These issues are particularly pertinent in the context of Gulf higher education, in which previous studies have pointed to the influence of the authoritarian teacher, formal learning structures and examination-driven practices in EFL classrooms (Aljasir, 2024). While these do not necessarily block the implementation of TBLT, it is likely to influence the ways in which teachers utilize this approach in practice. Thus, teachers may adapt TBLT slightly in that they continue to use teacher-led instruction along with the communicative activities rather than fully reject it or implement it extensively and exclusively, and investigating teachers' perceptions of TBLT implementation issues in Kuwaiti higher education is therefore useful.

A related issue is how teachers conceive of the function of tasks in language classroom instruction. From previous research, it appears that some teachers may perceive TBLT tasks as just an activity completed after explicit grammar instruction, but not as a fundamental way through which language learning occurs (Liu & Ren, 2021; Pham & Nguyen, 2018; Saragih et al., 2022). This practice may be more linked to accommodating TBLT to existing and educator conceptions of language teaching than direct rejection, but it may at the same time give rise to a situation of adaptationist which can entail some elements of TBLT being adopted without consideration for its broader purposes. Thus, identifying whether teachers adapt, limit or resist TBLT is crucial to understanding how conceptions may influence teaching practices, especially in less researched areas like Kuwaiti tertiary education.

2.5 TBLT in Kuwaiti Higher Education: Contextual Tensions and Research Gap

Despite the growing interest in communicative and task-based approaches in Kuwait, the implementation of TBLT is still encountered through a number of tensions, such as between pedagogical ambitions and actual classroom practices. English proficiency is highly regarded in Kuwait as a means of gaining access to higher education, employment and international communication (Alshuraiaan & Almekfeh, 2023). Despite policy trends favoring more communicative classrooms, exam-oriented and teacher-centric traditions may still control classroom choices, and there is not enough data to determine whether the benefits of TBLT outweigh its drawbacks for students' communicative competence in Kuwait (Alshuraiaan & Almekfeh, 2023). Such a discrepancy between policy and practice may have implications for teachers' willingness and readiness to establish TBLT classrooms, when they need to reconcile learner-centered ideals with the demands of summative assessment practices, lesson planning and classroom management (Malallah, 2000).

Although the use of CLT has become popular among language teachers in Kuwait, there is little research on teachers' perceptions of TBLT, or on their evolving roles in the classroom, and the influences of dilemmas that guide their implementation decisions among ESL teachers in higher education in Kuwait. Accordingly, exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences is important to perceive whether the implementation of TBLT is inappropriately modified, or as intended or hindered by contextual factors in two-year and four-year higher education in Kuwait.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, bringing together qualitative and quantitative data to explore how EFL teachers in Kuwait perceive TBLT. For the quantitative strand, a survey including Likert-scale and true/false items was used to capture teachers' familiarity with TBLT and their perceptions toward applying it in the classroom. In parallel, the qualitative component featured open-ended questions meant to have the teachers explain their thoughts in their own words. Both strands of data were analyzed independently and subsequently integrated at the interpretation stage to explore what teachers think about TBLT, as well as the reasoning behind their perspectives. The mixed-methods approach was particularly useful provided the exploratory aim of the study and the realization that TBLT is still under-researched in Kuwaiti higher education.

3.2 Context of the study

The study was conducted at Kuwait University (KU), a public higher education institution in Kuwait. The participants were EFL teachers from the College of Arts in KU. The college uses Arabic as the medium of instruction across different departments. Within the university, the English language is taught as a pre-sessional course as well as general English courses. All arriving students are required to take an English placement test, with the passing grade being compared to IELTS Band 5. Students who do not attain the necessary score are enrolled to a pre-sessional course in English prior to moving on to general English modules. As a consequence, many students attending these courses have a CEFR level of between A2 and B1. This makes the context ideal to investigate TBLT implementation.

3.3 Participants

A total of 33 teachers responded to the online questionnaire. The participants of this study were selected from experienced EFL teachers with the assumption that they would be able to comment appropriately on curriculum implementation and classroom practice. The large majority of the teachers (more than 80%) had more than five-year experience in teaching, and 60% of them were female. Most of the teachers (more than 50%) had classes of more than 26 students, a medium to large class size environment for the institutional context.

3.4 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was delivered to the participants electronically through Google Forms. The instrument was designed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling a holistic investigation of EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT. The questionnaire was adopted from previous research by Lin and Wu (2012) and Jeon and Hahn (2006) but modified to align with the higher education context in Kuwait and the study's main aims. The questionnaire featured three sections: (1) demographic information, (2) Likert-scale and true/ false items evaluating familiarity with TBLT and thoughts on implementation, and (3) three open-ended questions that asked the participants to define TBLT, define the classroom activities that they considered represent TBLT, and reflect on implementation challenges. Likert-scale items were assessed for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, and the instrument demonstrated acceptable reliability with each section ($\alpha > 0.70$). Prior to the administration, the questionnaire was reviewed for clarity and contextual relevance.

3.5 Data Collection

The questionnaire was sent out through Kuwait University's internal networks using an email invitation that featured a direct link to the survey. Due to time constraints, the researcher limited the data collection window to one week. Responses were anonymized during the collection process.

3.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Patterns in perceptions and perceived challenges of the teachers regarding TBLT were identified through descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. A Spearman's rho correlation analysis was used to test whether a relationship exists between teachers' years of teaching experience and TBLT perceptions. The correlation between teachers' views and teaching experience were determined by using Spearman's rho because the questionnaire produced ordinal level data originating from Likert scales.

Qualitative data analysis from the three open-ended questions was analyzed through thematic analysis using inductive coding process. The process helped to identify themes from recurring patterns in teachers' definitions of TBLT, reported challenges, and lesson descriptions. Qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated during the interpretation phase.

3.7 Ethics

The study was conducted in line with The School of Literature and Languages' Ethics Committee requirements for educational research. Informed consent was obtained from all research participants before any data was gathered. The personal details of the participants were not recorded or mentioned in any part of the research, and the anonymity of the participants was maintained at all stages.

4. Results

This part introduces the quantitative and qualitative findings concerning the study's two research questions about EFL teachers' perceptions about TBLT and the challenges perceived in the way of implementing TBLT in Kuwaiti higher education. Quantitative findings are first reported, before deriving qualitative insights from the open-ended responses.

4.1 Teachers' Knowledge of TBLT

Most EFL teachers showed generally strong theoretical understanding of the TBLT approach (See Table 1). Over 91% correctly recognized that a task emphasizes meaning over grammatical form, and about 88% correctly identified that tasks may involve any of the four language skills. However, a notable misinterpretation emerged: over half of the participants incorrectly identified a task as an exercise, suggesting that some teachers might interpret key TBLT concepts differently. Apart from this, responses from the other knowledge statements showed high levels of accuracy, with over 75% of the study participants answering correctly on a majority of the items even for statements addressing common misconceptions such as grammar integration within TBLT. In general, the results point to a fairly good conceptual grasp of TBLT, but with considerable variation in beliefs concerning specific task characteristics.

Table 1 : Knowledge of TBLT (True/ False)

Survey Items	Teachers' responses	
	True	False
9. A task is an exercise. (F)	54.5% (18)	45.5% (15)
10. A task involves a primary focus on meaning rather than grammatical forms. (T)	90.9% (30)	9.1% (3)
11. A task does not involve real-world processes of language use. (F)	15.2% (5)	84.8% (28)
12. A task involves any of the four language skills—reading, writing, listening, speaking. (T)	87.9% (29)	12.1% (4)
13. A task does not have a clear communicative outcome. (F)	12.1% (4)	87.9% (29)
14. TBLT is based on a teacher-centered teaching approach instead of a learner-centered approach. (F)	9.1% (3)	90.9% (30)
15. TBLT focuses more on grammar/ linguistics features rather than communication. (F)	12.1% (4)	87.9% (29)
16. TBLT should give learners enough opportunities to work on tasks in pairs or groups. (T)	90.9% (30)	9.1% (3)
17. Grammar cannot be taught through TBLT. (F)	24.2% (8)	75.8% (25)
18. Task-based learners should take part in language tasks that are similar to those found in the real world. (T)	87.9% (29)	12.1% (4)

4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of TBLT

Teachers reported moderately positive perceptions of TBLT ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.81$) (See Table 2). Items testing the effectiveness of TBLT and pedagogical value yielded high levels of agreement and confirmed the efficacy of real-world tasks. Furthermore, most EFL teachers expressed strong interest in using TBLT in their classrooms, with 78.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it fosters a collaborative environment encouraging active use of English ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.58$). Similarly, strong agreement was found for items indicating that TBLT increases interest in classroom implementation ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.74$).

Items relating to student autonomy, motivation, and integration of language skills yielded moderate agreement ($M = 3.58 - 3.73$). There was also moderate confidence among the teachers' ability to implement TBLT ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.79$). Feasibility concerns arose with only 57.6% agreeing that TBLT was feasible within their context ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.12$). Equally, 75.5% showed disagreement or uncertainty concerning its usefulness in classes of 40 students, meaning that their perceptions of suitability for large classes were comparatively low ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.03$). There was also lower agreement among items that measured preference for direct grammar instruction ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.92$), indicating that most teachers did not sturdily support grammar-focused alternatives over TBLT. Overall, the findings show favorable pedagogical attitudes toward TBLT, guided by contextual reservations concerning implementation.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of TBLT

Survey Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
9. I am interested in implementing TBLT in my classroom.	0% (0)	6.1% (2)	15.2% (5)	63.6% (21)	15.2% (5)	3.88	0.740
10. TBLT creates a collaborative environment.	0% (0)	0% (0)	21.2% (7)	66.7% (22)	12.1% (4)	3.91	0.579
11. TBLT activates learners' needs and interests.	0% (0)	9.1% (3)	33.3% (11)	45.5% (15)	12.1% (4)	3.61	0.827
12. TBLT enhances students' integrated language skills.	0% (0)	0% (0)	36.4% (12)	54.5% (18)	9.1% (3)	3.73	0.626
13. TBLT promotes student autonomy and motivation.	0% (0)	12.1% (4)	30.3% (10)	45.5% (15)	12.1% (4)	3.58	0.867
14. TBLT requires more preparation time than other methods.	30.3% (10)	57.6% (19)	9.1% (3)	3.0% (1)	0% (0)	1.85	0.712
15. TBLT is suitable for a class with 40 students.	12.1% (4)	42.4% (14)	24.2% (8)	18.2% (6)	3.0% (1)	2.58	1.032
16. TBLT materials should incorporate culturally relevant and real-world contexts to engage learners effectively.	0% (0)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)	66.7% (22)	15.2% (5)	3.88	0.781
17. TBLT is an effective teaching approach for improving English language learning outcomes.	0% (0)	3.0% (1)	15.2% (5)	60.6% (20)	21.2% (7)	4.00	0.707
18. TBLT is feasible in my teaching context	6.1% (2)	27.3% (9)	9.1% (3)	51.5% (17)	6.1% (2)	3.24	1.119
19. The direct grammar method is more suitable than TBLT for my students.	21.2% (7)	36.4% (12)	33.3% (11)	9.1% (3)	0% (0)	2.30	0.918
20. I feel confident in my ability to implement TBLT effectively.	0% (0)	9.1% (3)	30.3% (10)	51.5% (17)	9.1% (3)	3.61	0.788
21. I am willing to use TBLT in my teaching	0% (0)	15.2% (5)	21.2% (7)	57.6% (19)	6.1% (2)	3.55	0.833
Total (n =33)						3.361	0.810

4.3 Relationship Between Teaching Experience and Perceptions

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether there is an existing relationship between teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their years of teaching experience. Results (Table 3) indicated no significant correlation between the two variables ($r_s = .036$, $p = .842$). Within the study sample, teaching experience was not associated with more positive or negative perceptions of TBLT. This implies that teachers' perceptions were fairly consistent irrespective of the length of professional experience in the study sample.

Table 3. Spearman's rho Correlation

Teachers' Perceptions of TBLT	Spearman's rho	Years of teaching experience
	0.036	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.842
	N	33

4.4 Perceived Challenges in Implementing TBLT

Teachers within the study's sample reported moderate to high levels of concern regarding the challenges of practical implementation ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.96$). The most prominent challenges were syllabus rigidity and limited time, with 84.8% agreeing that these two constrained TBLT implementations ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.83$). Similarly, 81.8% expressed concerns about the mismatch between the current exam system and TBLT principles ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.88$). Classroom-related barriers were also a major factor. Almost 70% of teachers indicated facing challenges in managing large class sizes ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.01$) and unsuitable classroom setups ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.99$) as practical barriers to implementing TBLT. Other concerns arising from the study findings included insufficient teaching materials ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.06$) and limited preparation time ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.03$). Mixed responses were noted from items addressing conceptual uncertainty. Responses relating to prior exposure to TBLT were more varied than other challenge items, suggesting differences in teachers' professional backgrounds and training. Overall, both contextual and pedagogical challenges hinder TBLT, highlighting the need for systemic support and curriculum alignment.

Table 4. EFL Teachers' Perceptions of TBLT Implementation Challenges

Survey Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
32. I am not fully sure what TBLT is.	6.1% (2)	39.4% (13)	33.3% (11)	21.2% (7)	0% (0)	2.70	0.883
33. I didn't learn about TBLT.	6.1% (2)	21.2% (7)	24.2% (8)	42.4% (14)	6.1% (2)	3.21	1.053
34. My students' English level is low.	3.0% (1)	18.2% (6)	33.3% (11)	39.4% (13)	6.1% (2)	3.27	0.944
35. My classes are large to use group work.	0% (0)	18.2% (6)	12.1% (4)	48.5% (16)	21.2% (7)	3.73	1.008
36. My classroom setup makes group work difficult.	3.0% (1)	12.1% (4)	15.2% (5)	54.5% (18)	15.2% (5)	3.67	0.990
37. Hard to manage the class when students work in groups.	0% (0)	33.3% (11)	12.1% (4)	45.5% (15)	9.1% (3)	3.30	1.045
38. There are not enough teaching materials to support TBLT.	3.0% (1)	15.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	45.5% (15)	18.2% (6)	3.61	1.059
39. I don't have enough time to prepare tasks for TBLT.	0% (0)	24.2% (8)	15.2% (5)	45.5% (15)	15.2% (5)	3.52	1.034
40. The exam system does not match TBLT-style teaching.	0% (0)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)	51.5% (17)	30.3% (10)	4.03	0.883
41. Students prefer direct grammar instructions.	6.1% (2)	0% (0)	27.3% (9)	45.5% (15)	15.2% (5)	3.74	0.815
42. I must follow the syllabus, and the teaching time is limited.	0% (0)	9.1% (3)	6.1% (2)	60.6% (20)	24.2% (8)	4.00	0.829
Total (n=33)						3.52	0.96

4.5 Qualitative Findings

After conducting qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses, three themes emerged: (1) Conceptual understanding of TBLT as communicative and meaning-focused, (2) partial misconceptions concerning task structure, and (3) structural and

assessment-related barriers. The themes from the qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by providing insight into how teachers interpreted TBLT and explained the practical challenges affecting implementation.

TBLT as communicative and meaning-focused

A majority of the study participants defined TBLT as a communicative approach laying emphasis on real-world tasks, collaboration, and negotiation of meaning. Common references to accurate contexts, interaction among students, and goal-oriented activities were common.

Partial conceptual gaps

While references to collaboration and communication occurred often, relatively few of the definitions mentioned the criteria for a task as outlined by Skehan (1998) such as task outcomes and conditions. In keeping with the communicative focus of TBLT teachers showed a slightly less robust grasp of the core task structure.

Structural and assessment-related constraints

Teachers consistently identified curriculum-assessment misalignment with TBLT principles and students related barriers as key obstacles. Specific barriers noted included exam-driven teaching, large class sizes, and time limitations. These responses strengthened the quantitative findings emphasizing systemic barriers.

Across responses, teachers expressed wider theoretical support for TBLT but emphasized the practical barriers hindering its balanced implementation. These themes further supported the quantitative explanations. They drew emphasis back to the significance of the assessment systems and constraints imposed by classrooms size and curriculum.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that EFL teachers in Kuwaiti higher education have strong theoretical awareness of TBLT and hold reasonably positive perceptions of the approach. Nevertheless, the positive orientation has not been easily encased in the classroom. Teachers' interpretation and operationalization of task-based instruction continue to be seriously limited by certain constraints institutional, cultural, and classroom ones. This disparity between teachers' positive perceptions of, and actual application in, the classroom was the main finding of the study and points towards that the contextual reality influences practice more than teachers' pedagogical belief.

5.1 Teachers' conceptual understanding of TBLT

The findings indicate that teachers demonstrated a generally good level of knowledge, with some indications of stronger understanding in some aspects of tasks and TBLT. Most participants fittingly recognized that tasks rank meaning over grammatical form, are centered on learners, and entail real-world processes. This indicates an understanding of central principles acknowledged in foundational TBLT scholarship (Long, 1985; Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

Nonetheless, a partial gap emerged. More than half of the participants identified a task as an exercise, signifying limited misunderstanding of what makes up a pedagogical task. The distinction between a task and an exercise is important in TBLT literature, especially in light of Skehan's (1998) four defining criteria of tasks. The participants frequently emphasized meaning-focus, goals, and real-world connection in their definitions, but there remained limited explicit reference to clear outcome-evaluation or structured task cycles. This suggests that teachers' understanding might be partial rather than comprehensive, reflecting patterns in other EFL contexts. This distinction is quite significant since teachers who view exercises as the major method of language acquisition will more tend to treat communicative activities as additional activities.

Such kind of ambiguity in definitions has also been reported in other EFL contexts, where teachers back communicative principles but incorporate tasks as practice activities towards the end of a lesson (Liu et al., 2018; Pham & Nguyen, 2018). The findings of the present study seem consistent with this belief-practice tension. While teachers understand how tasks are valuable from a communicative perspective, they may not totally conceptualize their dimensions from a structural and evaluative perspective. Far from being a rejection of TBLT, the findings point rather to teachers reinterpreting principles of TBLT to suit the already existing lesson practices in order to produce hybridization as observed in many EFL contexts.

5.2 Positive perceptions accompanied by contextual reservations

Despite the identified knowledge gaps, Kuwaiti EFL teachers in this study generally conveyed moderate to positive perceptions of TBLT. Teachers underlined the approach's potential to encourage collaborative learning, elevate student engagement, and facilitate the alignment of teaching with the interests of the learners in the real world. These moderately positive perceptions align with findings from European and Asian contexts, where teachers usually indicate the ability of TBLT to encourage interaction and the practical use of language (Aliasir et al., 2019; Aliasir, 2024; Saragih et al., 2022).

Equally, teachers expressed hesitations regarding the feasibility of TBLT in Kuwaiti higher education. Hesitations seemed to arise from contextual constraints such as syllabus rigidity, exam-driven education systems, and large class sizes. This evidence supports the claim that positive attitudes alone cannot account for implementation in the face of institutional expectation breaches of communicative pedagogy. By identifying the value of task-based instruction, teachers acknowledge not only the social dimension of learning but also the communicative processes that facilitate second language acquisition. These findings reflect patterns described in examination-oriented educational systems, especially in East Asian and Gulf contexts, where systemic pressures usually limit communicative innovation (Carless, 2007; Hadba, 2019; Liu & Ren, 2021).

The support for TBLT along with the practical hesitation is a sign that positive perceptions on their own are inadequate predictors of implementation. This supports previous research showing that contextual variables may overshadow individual teacher beliefs in shaping classroom practice. In this regard, the attitudes of teachers in the study can be considered as being cautiously optimistic since they recognize the pedagogical value of the TBLT approach but still show much concern about the structural limitations that confine its full adoption. Their 'conditional' support thus seems to rely more on the structuring of the current institution rather than the notion of TBLT being developed more generally.

5.3 Teaching experience and perceptions

When considering if the years of experience of the teachers might shape their perceptions of TBLT, the findings of this study showed no clear influence. These findings suggest that professional longevity denoted by teaching experience, was not a key predictor of either weaker or stronger support for task-centered teaching in Kuwaiti context. Instead of experience being the decisive predictor, there are other contextual and training factors, such as institutional culture, curriculum demands, and professional development opportunities that exert greater influence. This backs the view that pedagogy beliefs are influenced not only by the years in service but also by contextual and systemic forces.

5.4 Structural and learner-related constraints

The study also examined the challenges faced by EFL teachers in Kuwaiti higher education while implementing TBLT. Institutional constraints and learner-related obstacles emerged as the most prominent barriers. The teachers identified exam-driven assessment systems and fixed curricula as key obstacles. The focus on teaching English has been on how students perform during tests, which makes routine memorization a priority instead of ensuring learners are competent in communication. When instructional success is examined mainly through performance in tests, communicative task-based instruction may seem misaligned with the priorities of the institution. This finding is consistent with literature laying emphasis to assessment orientation as an insistent barrier to the adoption of TBLT (Sadeq et al., 2020).

Large class sizes and the layout of the classroom were also identified as practical constraints. In overcrowded classrooms, monitoring groups and ensuring engagement was perceived as difficult. Similar concerns have been noted in other EFL contexts, where teachers reported loss of control and challenges monitoring interaction in the course of task-based activities (Al-Issa, 2012; Carless, 2007; Hasnain & Halder, 2023). Therefore, any classroom management issue can be turned into a pedagogical concern as it can have an impact on the way the tasks are structured or on teachers' attitude towards learner-centered approaches.

Study participants also discussed learner-related factors. Teachers noted students' preference for traditional grammar instruction and the inclination to revert to the first language during group work, thereby diminishing opportunities for L2 negotiation. These kinds of concerns reflect the tensions between cultural expectations of teacher-centered and learner-centered learning. Framed from a sociocultural perspective, the change from teacher authority to facilitator roles can challenge well-known classroom hierarchies, especially in Gulf educational settings (Aljasir, 2024; Malallah, 2000). These results demonstrate that teachers' pedagogical convictions and the social expectations of their authority have a combined effect on the decision-making of TBLT implementation. Ultimately, the constraints seem to act synergistically rather than independently, with contextual challenges and classroom demands both conspiring to persuade teachers to modify TBLT to suit their transitional teaching context rather than implement it as it was designed.

5.5 Theoretical implications

The findings provide insight into the interpretation of TBLT within certain sociocultural contexts. The emphasis on meaning-focused communication among the teachers aligns with principles resulting from the Interaction Hypothesis, positioning negotiation of meaning as crucial to the acquisition of language (Long, 1996). Nonetheless, concerns surrounding the autonomy of learners and management of activities in the classroom echoes sociocultural dynamics that shape the roles of teachers and students. From a socio-cultural context, effective implementation of TBLT may depend not entirely on interaction but also on guided support and steady changes in the structures of authority within the classroom. Instead of choosing a theory over the

other, the results suggest that the theories are both relevant and that they are useful in explaining different aspects of TBLT implementation. It is the interactionist point of view that makes teachers believe in communicative learning, while the sociocultural theory reveals the influence of institutional norms, teacher authority and context mediation on classroom practices.

This study depicts partial conceptualization of tasks, showing how theoretical definitions have a major bearing on classroom interpretation. Looking at tasks majorly as activities of communication without paying explicit attention to the structure and outcome, implementation may deviate from traditional TBLT models. Variations in how teachers understand tasks may thus be a significant process of theory-modification during the implementation process.

5.6 Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, solidifying teacher education programs could boost conceptual clarity concerning the design of tasks, especially in regard to task cycles and evaluation of outcomes. Professional development should go further than just familiarizing teachers with TBLT principles and focus more on how to plan and manage tasks, use scaffolding techniques, assessment practices, and classroom management strategies to enable teachers to enact communicative pedagogy in examination-oriented settings.

At the level of the institution, regular implementation of communicative approaches may be achieved by aligning the objectives of the curriculum and assessment practices. Until there is a higher degree of compatibility between the curricula' stated goals and the way in which they are assessed teachers are unlikely to satisfactorily implement TBLT principles, and will most probably adapt them to institutional requirements.

In sum, teachers in Kuwaiti higher education tend to recognize the theoretical and pedagogical value of TBLT. Their perceptions echoed throughout the study demonstrate wider support for communicative and collaborative instruction. However, structural constraints moderate this support and shape implementation decisions. The challenges experienced in Kuwait are not unique but are amplified within broader EFL contexts. At the same time, TBLT is not officially adopted in Kuwait's English language education system, which also play a critical role in restricting systematic adoption. Taken together, these results indicate that the major challenge to successful implementation of TBLT in Kuwaiti higher education is not teachers' lack of knowledge per se but the intersections of teachers' pedagogical ideologies, institutional policies and constraints and the realities of the classroom. Framing implementation as a contextual and not a pedagogical issue, thus offers a more comprehensive explanation of teachers' positive perceptions of TBLT and their lack of use.

6. Conclusions

This study indicates that although EFL teachers in Kuwaiti higher education are aware of the pedagogical advantages of TBLT, they are still operating within a number of contextual limitations that determine its implementation in practice.

The findings indicate three predominant patterns. First, teachers showed generally strong, though not fully comprehensive knowledge of TBLT. They appeared to understand the roles of teachers as facilitators and students taking an active role in their learning. However, some conceptual ambiguity was noted with regard to learners differentiating tasks from exercises. This indicates that conceptual knowledge per se cannot guarantee a faithful extension when teachers do not share a conception of a pedagogical task.

The second pattern painted teachers conveying moderate to positive yet cautious perceptions of implementing TBLT. Teachers recognized the value of the approach, acknowledged its ability to enhance language skills, build actual communication abilities, and increased the involvement of the students. Equally, they voiced concerns surrounding the readiness of students to take more responsibility for their learning and their ability to engage on their own in task-based activities. These results suggest that the adoption of TBLT will also depend on the teachers' confidence that this approach is do-able within their teaching context.

Third, several obstacles were noted including exam-focused assessment methods, student resistance, large class sizes, and an inflexible curriculum. Putting these findings together, it is evident that the main inhibiting factor to implementation of TBLT is systemic (not just individual teacher) and thus implementation is as much about institutionally induced obstacles as it is about teachers' own willingness.

Overall, these results point to the idea that successful TBLT implementation involves an interaction between teacher cognition and contextual factors. While positive attitudes and a good theoretical base were found, these were often nuanced by assessment, classroom and institutional agendas. This would support the need to conceptualize implementation as a contextual, rather than teacher belief, issue. It also demonstrates the benefits of view the practice of TBLT through both an interactionist and

sociocultural lens-successful application of TBLT relies not only on interaction but also on the social surroundings in which this interaction takes place.

This study offers empirical evidence from a relatively unexplored higher education context to the existing body of research on TBLT and suggests that teachers' pedagogical perceptions and conceptual knowledge, by themselves, are not directly linked to TBLT implementation. Factors of Pedagogic belief and Contextual realities interact to influence TBLT implementation. The implications of this study offer a rich ground for future research and may assist with teacher education, curriculum planning and implementation of CLT in Kuwaiti higher education.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Aliasin, S. H., Saeedi, Zahra, & and Pineh, A. J. (2019). The relationship between EFL teachers' perception of task-based language teaching and their dominant teaching style. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1589413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2019.1589413>.
- [2] Al-Issa, A. (2012). Re-conceptualizing English language teaching teacher education and development in the Gulf cooperation council countries: Addressing transformations and challenges. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 5(5), 537–559.
- [3] Aljasir, N. (2024). Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in Saudi EFL Classrooms: An Analysis of Teacher Beliefs and Practices. *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (IJTEPD)*, 7(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJTEPD.354736>.
- [4] Almeffleh, H., Alshuraiaan, A., & Alhajiri, F. (2023). Assessing the Efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching in TESOL Settings. *British Journal of Teacher Education and Pedagogy*, 2(3), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.32996/bjtep.2023.2.3.2>.
- [5] Al-Senafi, B., & Al-Haji, B. (2023). The Impact of Using Task-Based Learning as a Pedagogical Tool to Improve Advanced Writing Skills of Students in College of Basic Education Kuwait. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11(2), 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijelt.13/vol11n26171>.
- [6] Alshuraiaan, A., & Almeffleh, H. (2023). Exploring Effective Pedagogical Approaches and Strategies for TESOL Education to Enhance English Language Learning in Kuwait. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 6(8), 250–258. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlt.2023.6.8.25>.
- [7] Astika, G. (2025). *Teaching Grammar in the English Language Classroom: From Theory to Practice*. Gusti Astika.
- [8] Carless, D. (2007). The suitability of task-based approaches for secondary schools: Perspectives from Hong Kong. *System*, 35(4), 595–608. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.09.003>.
- [9] Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative Competence: A Pedagogically Motivated Model with Content Specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.5070/L462005216>.
- [10] Crookes, G., & Gass, S. M. (1993). *Tasks and Language Learning: Integrating Theory and Practice*. Multilingual Matters.
- [11] Ellis, R., & Shintani, N. (2013). *Exploring Language Pedagogy through Second Language Acquisition Research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203796580>.
- [12] Fahim, M., & Haghani, M. (2012). Sociocultural Perspectives on Foreign Language Learning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(4), 693–699. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.4.693-699>.
- [13] Fatima, S., & Al Qenai, R. (2021). English as a Lingua-Franca: A Conflict between Global and Other Languages of Kuwait. *Language in India*, 21(4), 115.
- [14] Hadba, H. (2019). Teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward the change to a task-based curriculum in an English programme at a university in Qatar. *University of Exeter*.
- [15] Hasnain, S., & and Halder, S. (2023). Exploring the impediments for successful implementation of the task-based language teaching approach: A review of studies on teachers' perceptions. *The Language Learning Journal*, 51(2), 208–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2021.1989015>.
- [16] Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching*, 40(3), 243–249. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004363>.
- [17] Liu, Y., & Ren, W. (2021). Task-based language teaching in a local EFL context: Chinese university teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research*, 28(6), 2234–2250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211044247>.
- [18] Long, M. H. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition: Task-based language teaching. In K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition*. Multilingual Matters.

- [19] Long, M. H. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K. D. Bot, R. B. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign Language Research in Cross-cultural Perspective*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- [20] Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). <https://oa.mg/work/10.1016/b978-012589042-7/50015-3>.
- [21] Malallah, S. (2000). English in an Arabic environment: Current attitudes to English among Kuwait University students. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3(1), 19–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050008667698>.
- [22] McAllister, J., Narcy-Combes, M.-F., & Starkey-Perret, R. (2012). Language teachers' perceptions of a task-based learning programme in a French University. In A. Shehadeh & C. A. Coombe (Eds.), *Task-Based Language Teaching in Foreign Language Contexts. Research and Implementation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- [23] Pham, N. T., & Nguyen, H. B. (2018). Teachers' perceptions about task-based language teaching and its implementation. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 3(2), Article 0. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejfl.v0i0.1619>.
- [24] Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford University Press.
- [25] Saputro, T. H., Hima, A. N., & Farah, R. R. (2021). Benefits and challenges of doing task-based language teaching in Indonesia: Teachers' perception. *KEMBARA: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya*, 7(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v7i1.15805>.
- [26] Saragih, W., Saragih, N. A., Siregar, R. A., & Natalia, C. H. (2022). Investigating EFL Teachers' Perception on Task-based Language Teaching for Speaking Skills. *Teaching English Language*, 16(1), 203–234. <https://doi.org/10.22132/tel.2022.151148>.
- [27] Skehan, P. (1998). Task-based instruction. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 18, 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500003585>.
- [28] Tabatabaei, O., & Hadi, A. (2011). Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Pedagogy. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 1(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.3968/j.hess.1927024020110102.1566>.
- [29] Taiba, S., Rahima, A., & Fatma, A. (2020). Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kuwait: From the Ideal to Real. *English Language Teaching*, 14, 1–1. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n1p1>.
- [30] Van den Branden, K. (2006). Training teachers: Task-based as well? In K. Van den Branden (Ed.), *Task-Based Language Education: From Theory to Practice* (pp. 217–248). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667282.011>.