

A Systematic Review on Task-based language teaching (TBLT) across Twenty Studies

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Abstract

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become an international phenomenon as a learner-oriented approach that promotes communicative competence through meaningful tasks. Although TBLT has received extensive scholarly attention, gaps remain in situational adaptation, technological integration and cross-cultural application, particularly in Asian settings. To address these gaps, this review paper synthesizes twenty peer-reviewed studies on TBLT published between August 2007 and June 2024, drawing predominately on research conducted in Bangladesh, China, and Japan, alongside a smaller number of empirical studies from Indonesia and Iran and conceptual/background pieces from United Kingdom. Following and adapted PRISMA 2020 process, the 20 articles were analyzed under four themes: technology integration, teacher-learner beliefs and perceptions, task-typology, and cultural modifications. Majority of the studies are focused on tertiary education and study the perception of teachers and students. Technology enhanced TBLT is depicted to have a positive effect on learner motivation and oral communication, particularly listening and speaking. Culturally responsive practice and task adaptations that are context-specific are under-researched. These findings indicate a need for more diversified, contextually grounded, and methodologically rigorous TBLT research, particularly in underrepresented Asian settings.

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Introduction

The development of communicative competence in the target language is widely agreed to be the central aim of language teaching and learning worldwide. This communicative agenda has been pursued through a range of classroom approaches, one of the most influential being Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (East, 2021). TBLT emerged in the 1980s as a learner-centered, experiential alternative to more established communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches to second language (L2) instruction. Its development has been driven by advances in second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research, alongside growing dissatisfaction with the strongly teacher-guided, grammar-focused orientation of earlier pedagogic approaches (East, 2025). TBLT has since become one of the most widely adopted approaches to designing and conducting language classes today (Jackson, 2022).

The concept of ‘task’ is central to TBLT. In this approach, learners use language primarily to convey meaning while engaging in pedagogic tasks designed to achieve a specific objective (East, 2025; Nunan, 2004). Language teachers worldwide apply tasks to structure their teaching in several interrelated ways. First, the concept of ‘task’ provides a coherent framework for articulating the rationale, content, and methods of language instruction. Second, the TBLT literature offers practical guidance for realizing this framework, linking curriculum design, materials, teaching, and assessment. Third, and most importantly, TBLT reflects the principle that classroom learning should be responsive to learners’ real-world language needs (Jackson, 2022). Pica et al. (2009) identified five types of pedagogic tasks: jigsaw, information gap, problem-solving, decision-making, and opinion exchange building on N. S. Prabhu’s earlier, less differentiated typology of information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap tasks developed through the Bangalore Project. Pica and colleagues further argued that these five task types vary according to interactional activity (information flow and interaction requirements) and communicative goal (goal orientation and outcome options). Bygate (2020) contended that although TBLT is defined by the needs and interests of language teachers and learners, it is also shaped by academic research priorities that can distance it from its real-world objectives. Despite this tension, recent studies comparing TBLT programs with traditional, non-TBLT programs indicate that task-based instruction produces stronger gains in L2 outcomes and more positive attitudes toward TBLT among both teachers and learners (Jackson, 2022).

Existing research from Bangladesh and other Asian contexts has paid considerable attention to teacher and learner beliefs, but comparatively less to technology integration, task typology, and contextual modification in TBLT implementation. Although 15% of the studies included in this review examined technology integration, other critical dimensions—task diversity and context-specific adaptation remain markedly under-explored. A further concern is that more than half of the reviewed studies were published in non-indexed journals, raising questions about the rigor, visibility, and peer-reviewed status of a substantial portion of the existing TBLT literature. These patterns point to a need for further research into under-studied aspects of TBLT and for greater scholarly investment in indexed, peer-reviewed outlets. While several existing reviews have examined teacher or student perspectives on TBLT individually, or within a single national context, few have systematically synthesized these perspectives across multiple Asian settings within a single integrative framework. Against this backdrop, this study systematically reviews empirical TBLT research to address two objectives:

- to provide an overview of the selected TBLT studies in terms of the thematic focus, journal ranking, geographical location, and year of publication;
- to identify themes emerging from reviewed articles.

Methodology

In this review, twenty articles get included on TBLT published between 2007 and 2024 were included, following a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process. The SLR method summarizes the research by implementing particular eligibility criteria and direct search strategy allowing inferring an evidence-based decision making to build up a practice (Višić, 2022). I have used an Adapted PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of Višić also referred

to as PRISMA statement (see Figure 1) to explain the entire image of the process between the starting and completion of screening outputs. Following screening, twenty articles were retained from an initial pool of fifty-seven.

Database Search Strategy

The search was conducted in July 2024 across Scopus and a range of non-Scopus-indexed databases and regional platforms, including Google Scholar, ERIC, J-STAGE, and BanglaJOL. Search strings combined the terms “task-based language teaching,” “TBLT,” “task-based instruction,” and “task-based learning” with “teacher belief*,” “student perception*,” and “technology-enhanced,” together with the country terms Bangladesh, China, and Japan, combined using Boolean operators (AND/OR). The search was restricted to English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles published between August 2007 and June 2024.

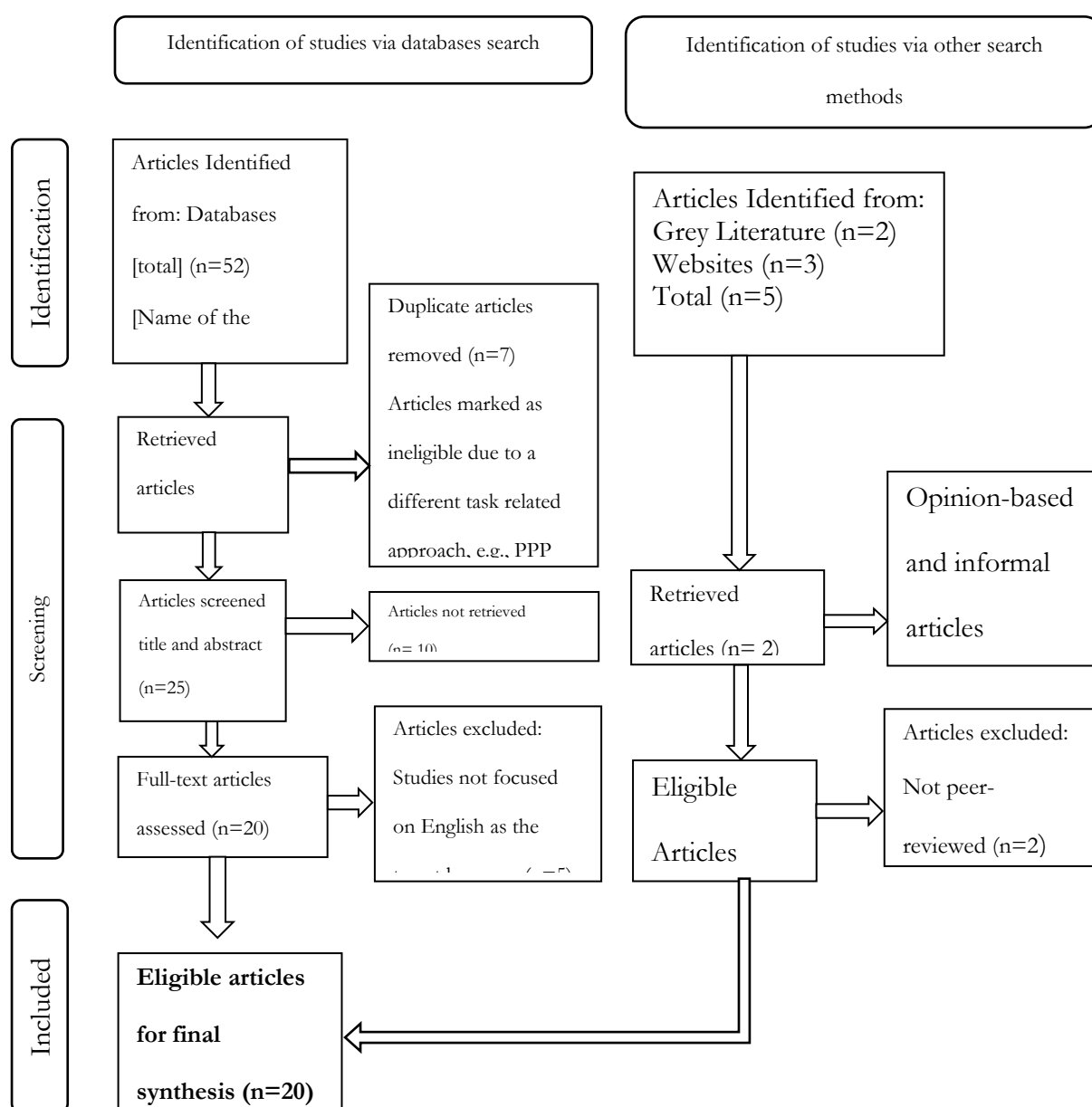


Figure 1: Using PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of Višić

Identification, Screening, and Inclusion (Figure 1)

Following the adapted PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram, Figure 1 (below) summarizes the structured screening and selection process.

- Identification: 57 articles were identified through database searches ($n = 52$) and other methods ($n = 5$, comprising grey literature and websites).
- Screening: After removing duplicates ($n = 7$) and articles employing a different task-related approach, such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) ($n = 10$), 35 articles remained. A further 10 articles could not be retrieved, leaving 25 articles for title-and-abstract screening.
- Eligibility: Five articles not focused on English as the target language were excluded, leaving 20 articles for full-text assessment; a further 3 opinion-based or informal articles were removed at this stage. Of 2 remaining candidate articles, both were excluded for not meeting the peer-review requirement, and no additional articles were incorporated through the supplementary search route.
- Included: Twenty articles met all inclusion criteria and were retained for final synthesis.

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- published between August 2007 and June 2024;
- examined teachers' and/or learners' perspectives;
- were peer-reviewed journal articles;
- used English as the target language of instruction.

The database search contributed the large majority of records (91.23% of the initial 57), while duplicate and methodologically ineligible articles (32.7% of database records) were removed at the initial screening stage. Overall, 64.91% of identified records were excluded across the identification-to-inclusion process, yielding the final sample of 20 articles.

Quality Appraisal

This review did not apply a formal quality or risk-of-bias appraisal tool, such as the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) or AMSTAR 2 to the included studies. All 20 studies were therefore treated as equally weighted evidence in the synthesis, irrespective of research design or methodological rigor. This is acknowledged as a limitation of the present review (see Conclusion), and future systematic reviews of TBLT literature are encouraged to incorporate a formal appraisal step to distinguish stronger from weaker evidence within the included set.

Table 1. Classification based on published year duration (2007-2024)

Published Year	<i>N</i>	% (of <i>N</i> =20)
2019-2024	14	70%
2013-2018	5	25%
2007-2012	1	5%

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the studies selected for this review were published in recent years (2019–2024), reflecting the current state of the TBLT field; the period 2007–2018 is comparatively under-represented.

Table 2. Classification based on journal rank and publisher

Journal Rank	N	%	Publisher (s)	Sources
Scopus-indexed	9	45%	Routledge; Sage; Taylor & Francis; MEXTESOL A.C.; GATE Association	Taylor & Francis Online; Google Scholar
Not Scopus- indexed	11	55%	University of Hong Kong; Darcy & Roy Press; Infogain Publication; ICRRD	J-STAGE; BanglaJOL; Google Scholar

Table 2 shows that just over half of the reviewed articles were published in regional, non-Scopus-indexed journals, while close to half appeared in Scopus-indexed international journals (Q1 and Q2). This distribution suggests a mixture of local and global engagement with TBLT scholarship.

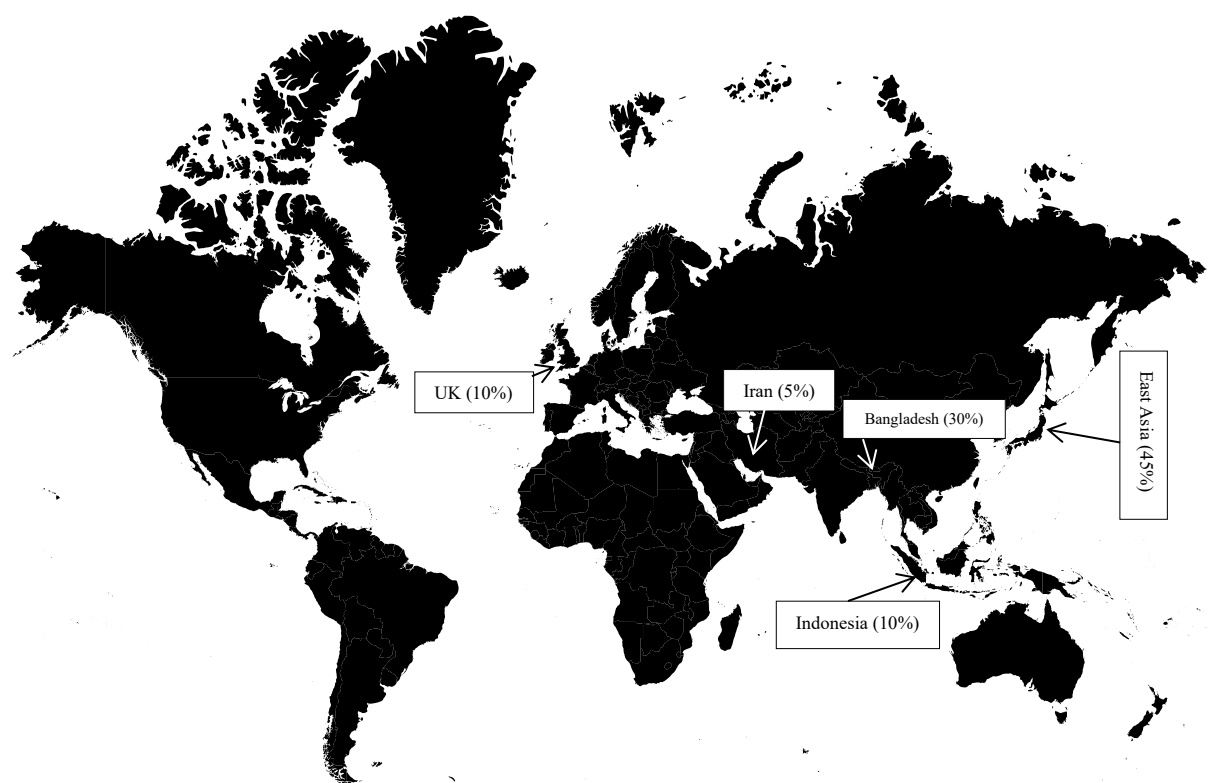


Figure 2: Classification based on geographical data

The 20 included studies are distributed as follows: East Asia 45%, Bangladesh 30%, Indonesia 10%, the United Kingdom 10%, and Iran 5%. The UK-located sources are conceptual and background pieces (Bruton, 2005; Martin, 2015) rather than empirical studies situated in Bangladesh, China, or Japan; they were retained because they provide theoretical grounding for the review's thematic synthesis. Readers should therefore note that while the review's empirical focus is concentrated in Bangladesh, China, and Japan, the full sample of 20 sources also includes empirical work from Indonesia and Iran and conceptual work from the United Kingdom. Within the Asian sample, studies are drawn from East, South, and Southeast Asia, reflecting a broadly Asian-context orientation in TBLT research.

Table 3. Classification based on thematic focus

Major themes	<i>N</i>	% (of <i>N</i> =20)
Technology and TBLT	3	15%
Beliefs and Perceptions	10	50%
Task Types in TBLT	4	20%
Contextual Modifications for TBLT approach	3	15%

Table 3 shows that teacher and learner beliefs and perceptions dominate the selected TBLT literature, followed by task types, technology integration, and contextual modification, in that order.

Table 4a. Classification based on document type

Document Type	<i>N</i>	% (of <i>N</i> =20)
Empirical studies	14	70%
Non-empirical (scholarly/conceptual papers)	6	30%

Table 4b. Classification based on research design

Research Method	<i>N</i>	% (of <i>N</i> =20)
Qualitative	4	28.6%
Quantitative	3	21.4%
Mixed-Methods	7	50.0%

Table 4 shows that the papers that are included in this literature review have different research design. Because 'scholarly paper' describes a document type rather than a research design, Table 4 separates empirical from non-empirical contributions (Table 4a) and reports research design only for the empirical subset (Table 4b). Within the empirical

studies, mixed-methods designs predominate, followed by qualitative and quantitative approaches

Table 5. Classification based on educational level

Educational Level	<i>N</i>	% (of <i>N</i> =20)
Tertiary Education	14	70%
Secondary	5	25%
Elementary	1	5%

Table 5 indicates that tertiary education accounts for the majority of the sampled studies, followed by secondary and elementary education, reflecting the overall composition of TBLT research included in this review.

Findings

This review found that TBLT research most often targets tertiary education, particularly within Bangladesh, China, and Japan. Teacher beliefs and perceptions emerged as the most developed theme, foregrounding implementation barriers such as insufficient training, conventional curriculum constraints, and limited awareness of TBLT principles. Although one-fifth of the studies addressed technology integration (e.g., synchronous/asynchronous computer-mediated communication, computer-assisted language learning, multimedia), task typology and contextual adaptation received comparatively less attention. Four themes were identified through this review and are discussed in turn below.

Table 6. A summary of the findings from the selected studies

Year	Research Objective	Research Type	Instrument	Participants
2021	To examine the influence of technology-enhanced TBLT on ESP learners' listening comprehension, and the impact of ESP learners' speaking performance	Quantitative	Test	Students
2019	To investigated the effectiveness of CALL-mediated TBLT on the motivation	Quantitative	Test	Students
2021	To assess lexical diversity and syntactic complexity using Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC	Mixed-methods	FGD and Test	Students

2018	To understand teachers' views on implementing TBLT	Mixed-methods	Survey	Teachers
2024	To understand teachers' perceptions of the roles of teacher and student	Qualitative	Interview	Teachers
2013	To understand the definition of TBLT and why it might be important for Japanese context	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Teachers
2024	To assess the teachers' perspectives and beliefs about providing corrective feedback, frequency of providing feedback, and class time allocation for the feedback in TBLT	Mixed-methods	FGD and survey	Teachers
2024	To test Efficacy and Contextual Dimensions of TBLT	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Students
2024	To evaluate perceptions of Bangladeshi university instructors and students regarding the TBLT	Qualitative	Observation and Interview	Instructors and students
2023	To investigate perceptions of teachers and students regarding the implementation of TBLT	Qualitative	Observation and Interview	Teachers
2023	To explore student's experience the implementation of TBLT in the development of their writing skills	Qualitative	FGD and Interview	Students
2021	To determine Teachers' Understandings of Task and TBLT	Mixed-methods	Survey	Teachers
2024	To evaluate students' perceptions of TBLs	Mixed-methods	Test	Students
2021	To investigate the application of TBLT in the EFL classroom	Mixed-methods	Observation and Interview	Students
2024	To study Task Types that Facilitate the Flow Experience	Quantitative	One-way ANOVA test	Students
2015	To provide a comprehensive overview of TBLT, its origins, current developments, and future directions	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Teachers and students
2007	To evaluate the applicability of TBLT to state secondary foreign language classes.	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Teachers and students

2018	To determine the disparities between the TBLT approach and the traditional teaching and learning practices	Mixed-methods	Survey and FGD	Students
2020	To examine the rationale for researching TBLT in English language teaching	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Teachers
2013	To understand TBLT and to examining the challenges faced by both educators and learner in Asian contexts	Scholarly Paper	Secondary Data	Teachers and students

Technology and TBLT Framework

Technology integration in TBLT has attracted growing attention, reflecting broader trends in educational practice previously dominated by non-digital methods. This review identified three empirical studies examining technology and TBLT. Their findings indicate improvements across several dimensions of TBLT—listening, speaking, reading, and learner motivation—as well as insight into how technology can be incorporated within the TBLT framework.

Mulyadi et al. (2021) examined the effect of technology-enhanced TBLT on ESP learners' listening comprehension and speaking performance. The experimental group showed improved listening comprehension relative to the control group (mean scores of 44.06 and 39.76, respectively). Technology-enhanced TBLT also had a significant effect on speaking performance as measured through role-play assessment; however, no significant change was found in speaking performance following online presentations or online group discussion, suggesting that face-to-face communication may be comparably effective to technology-mediated formats for speaking-skill development. Using a similarly quantitative design, Tavakoli et al. (2019) examined the influence of CALL-mediated TBLT on the motivation of Iranian university non-English-major EFL students in reading. A large effect emerged for CALL-mediated TBLT ($F = 267.932$, $p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .770$); here F value in this case implies that there are large variations in the outcomes of the control and experimental groups; p value implies very high levels of statistical significance of the outcomes and partial eta squared value imply that the CALL mediated intervention explains most of the variance in motivation implying that CALL mediated TBLT was found to create positivity in the motivation of the students in the experimental group on the post-test, thus indicating substantial variation between control and experimental groups, high statistical significance, and a large proportion of variance in motivation explained by the intervention; CALL-mediated TBLT was associated with increased motivation among the experimental group at post-test. Taking a different focus, Shiroyama (2021) used a mixed-methods design to investigate variation in lexical diversity and syntactic development in discourse generated through synchronous versus asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC).

These findings are broadly consistent with the wider literature: several recent studies and reviews report that technology-enhanced and technology-mediated TBLT is associated with gains in learner motivation and oral-skill development, with some also reporting the same asymmetry observed here—stronger gains on structured tasks such as role-play,

alongside weaker or non-significant gains on unstructured formats such as open-ended online discussion. Given the small number of studies ($n = 3$) addressing this theme, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive.

Teacher Beliefs and Perceptions

Half of the studies included in this review ($n = 10$) examined teacher beliefs and perceptions of the TBLT framework. While these studies share a common thematic focus, they address a range of related constructs, including definitions and conceptions of TBLT, practical implementation, barriers to integration, motivations for adoption or resistance, communicative skill development, corrective feedback practices, pedagogical variety, and student perceptions.

Liu et al. (2021) examined Chinese college teachers' knowledge of TBLT, their views on its implementation, and their reasons for adopting or hesitating to adopt the approach. This mixed-methods study found that although approximately 80% of participating teachers rated their own knowledge of TBLT as low, most reported using TBLT in their classrooms, and 93.18% intended to continue doing so. Teachers' positive orientation toward TBLT was attributed primarily to its collaborative, interactional character and its motivating potential; key barriers to implementation included resource constraints, administrative limitations, and student- and teacher-related limitations. Liu and Ren (2024) reported broadly similar findings in a qualitative study of Chinese university EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher and student roles, TBLT implementation, and associated challenges. Teachers in this study tended to adopt a 'task-supported' rather than fully task-based approach and favoured a student-centred teacher–student relationship. A Japanese study by Kotaka (2013) examined the definition of TBLT, its relevance to the Japanese context, associated limitations, and approaches suited to developing communicative competence in English in Japan; the study concluded that teachers require deeper knowledge of TBLT concepts, implementation challenges, and the underlying principles of SLA. Similar findings were reported in two Bangladesh-based studies (Munira & Baron Sikder, 2021.; Yasmin et al., 2024), which examined instructors' and students' perceptions of TBLT, identified positive classroom outcomes, and highlighted the need for additional teacher training and workshops. Two further Bangladesh-based studies (Khan Milon et al., 2023; Serajuddin, 2024) examined instructors' and learners' perceptions of TBLT adoption in tertiary speaking classes at a private university, concluding that instructors' capacity to deliver task-based instruction meaningfully shapes learners' experience. Kamal et al. (2024) extended this theme to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), examining teachers' beliefs about the nature, frequency, and time allocation of corrective feedback in TBLT and CLIL classrooms; teachers in this sample were generally positive about providing corrective feedback in both contexts.

Task Types in TBLT

Task typology was the focus of 15% of the studies included in this review. These studies examine how tasks are designed and evaluated within TBLT, showing that task selection and sequencing can influence learner motivation and fluency, as demonstrated in Japanese- and UK-based studies.

Farhatunnisa and Umam (2020) examined how 'TBLT' can be used in the EFL classroom and the type of tasks that may be utilized to aid in scaffolding writing skills and how well it works to do that. Having completed all activities in this research, the researcher discovered that there are four types of tasks that can be employed to scaffold writing skill of students in recount text, namely storytelling performance, multiple choice tasks, comparing tasks and ordering tasks. Furthermore, Kashiwa et al. (2024) considered the task type differences as an incentive to flow and the presence of the correlation between the flow of learners on the one hand and the motivation to learn English on the other hand. In the study by Bruton (2005), they explored the relevance of TBLT. The article began with a definition of TBLT and main components of this approach, among which is the utilization of communicative oral peer work tasks (COPTs) that constitute the core of in-class activity. It then argued the reasons to employ the usage of tasks both as syllabus and as method and then argued pros and cons of this method. In contrast to the preceding works, Martin, (2015) attempted to address a broad picture of TBLT, its background and evolutions, and what may lie ahead. The article gave the development of TBLT concerning previous language teaching procedures and second connected language learning studies.

Contextual Modifications for TBLT Approach

Among all papers evaluated, 15% of the papers expressed the theme to take contextual adjustments on the 'TBLT' practice in the Asian region. The papers researched how the culture and situational factors influences such adaptation of the TBLT and discussed how the traditional teacher-based pedagogies, examination-based systems and language hierarchy complicate the mere use of TBLT particularly during the teaching of grammar. The field of grammar instruction in English classes should be promoted in the study by Ji & Pham (2020), where the differences between the TBLT approach and the traditional teaching-learning process in classrooms and the TBLT practices can be altered. The results revealed various inconsistencies between teaching and learning tradition in China and the tenets of TBLT as the students did not gain implicit knowledge whereas TBLT aimed to allow students to gain knowledge about what was not explicitly mentioned; the students became dependent on the teacher presentation when TBLT endeavored the students to learn without a teacher but on their own; the students were not comfortable as a group worker when TBLT stressed the student centered study within the framework of group learning; and the students did not need related grammatical input when TBLT compelled students to acquire total knowledge. In order to overcome these mismatches, the primary changes in TBLT were done by including grammatical input, inducing the students to pay attention to form, discussing grammar issues and giving each other corrective feedback, and noting the role of the teacher to be active in tasks as facilitator. Furthermore, Chen (2023) also tried to justify the necessity of studying TBLT task types in the study of English language and explained the research methods used in the study, described the most significant themes investigated, and underlined the necessity of such research. In findings, junior high school and university English teaching yielded positive results with respect to motivation of students in both aspects as a result of the TBLT task. In addition, the author of the paper mentioned above. Hashinishi (2013) has conducted a review of 12 studies published so far on TBLT, emphasizing the issues related to its implementation faced by teachers and learners under investigation, the

flexibility of TBLT, and its suitability and applicability in the Asian context. The conclusion of the paper states that it is essential to adapt TBLT to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reality of Asia, to provide a series of teacher training programs, and even to rethink the strategies of classroom management in order to optimize their efficacy. The possible challenges that were revealed in these studies are the contradictions between the traditional educational requirements and TBLT, size of the classes, pedagogical knowledge and confidence in TBLT among teachers, over-accentuated focus on grammar-based instruction and the tendency to use a lot the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) approach, the reluctance of learners to do communicative tasks and the underdeveloped English proficiency level, and the prevalence of exam-focused instruction.

Limitations

This review is subject to several limitations. First, no formal quality or risk-of-bias appraisal tool was applied to the included studies; all 20 articles were therefore treated as equally weighted evidence regardless of research design or methodological rigor. Future reviews of TBLT literature should incorporate a structured appraisal tool, such as the MMAT or AMSTAR 2, to differentiate stronger from weaker evidence. Second, although the review's empirical focus centers on Bangladesh, China, and Japan, the final sample of 20 sources also includes empirical studies from Indonesia and Iran and conceptual/background work from the United Kingdom, retained for their contribution to the four-theme synthesis; readers seeking a strictly three-country empirical sample should note this broader scope. Third, this review was conducted by a single reviewer, which may introduce selection and coding bias despite the use of a structured, PRISMA-based protocol.

Conclusion

This systematic review offers an overview of recent trends, thematic emphases, and gaps in TBLT research, with particular attention to Asian contexts. The predominant focus on teacher beliefs and perceptions is among the review's most notable findings: most reviewed studies, particularly from Bangladesh, China, and Japan, center on how educators understand, interpret, and operationalize TBLT within their own teaching environments. This pattern suggests that although TBLT is widely recognized as a communicative, student-centered pedagogy, its implementation continues to face substantial challenges shaped by entrenched teacher beliefs and long-standing traditional teaching paradigms.

In the context of Bangladesh, specifically, all selected studies focused on teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and practical challenges in adopting and implementing TBLT. This highlights a persistent gap between growing awareness of task-based pedagogy and its consistent application at the classroom level: many teachers continue to rely on more teacher-centered, rigid models such as PPP or the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emphasize grammatical accuracy and rote learning rather than the communicative development that TBLT intends to foster.

Beyond the substantial body of research on beliefs and perceptions, this review identified a comparative lack of research in three areas: (1) technology integration within TBLT, (2)

task typology, and (3) contextual modifications responsive to local classroom realities. Few reviewed studies examined how digital tools and platforms might support TBLT implementation—a notable gap, since the studies that did address technology-enhanced TBLT reported positive effects on listening, speaking, reading, and learner motivation, alongside more limited gains for online presentation and group discussion formats. These findings, however, are based on a small number of studies and cannot be generalized. Contextual adaptation of the TBLT framework likewise remains under-examined: although the theoretical foundations of TBLT are broadly universal, socio-cultural and structural factors continue to constrain its applicability within Asian classrooms.

In sum, while belief-oriented studies have established a baseline understanding of the challenges of implementing TBLT in Asia, future research should diversify to address technological integration, task variation, and contextual adaptation more fully. Doing so would deepen the theoretical foundation of TBLT and strengthen its practical viability across diverse educational contexts. A more context-sensitive, inclusive, and methodologically balanced research agenda; one that reconciles TBLT's universal pedagogical principles with local classroom realities will be central to its continued development.

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