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Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Resource-Constrained Classrooms: Practices, Barriers, and Student Outcomes

Basma Husain Mohammed

Salah al-Din General Directorate of Education

* *Corresponding author: E-mail* : basmahuseen96@gmail.com

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E-mail t-jtuh@tu.edu.iq

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A B S T R A C T

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) centers on meaningful, real-life tasks rather than rigid form-based exercises, offering strong theoretical and pedagogical benefits for second language acquisition. However, implementing TBLT in under-resourced, large EFL classrooms remains uneven due to inflexible curricula, material scarcity, and inadequate teacher training.

This study critically reviews empirical research from 2020 to 2024 to examine how EFL teachers navigate resource-constrained settings, the structural barriers they face, and the resulting linguistic and affective outcomes for students. The findings indicate that while TBLT significantly boosts student motivation, reading self-efficacy, and oral and writing skills, its success is frequently hindered by systemic and contextual constraints.

To overcome these challenges, the paper outlines evidence-based recommendations, including adaptive task design, targeted teacher professional development, and supportive policy reforms to ensure effective TBLT implementation despite resource scarcity.

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تنفيذ التدريس القائم على المهام في البيئات الصفية محدودة الموارد: الممارسات، التحديات، ونتائج تعلم الطلبة

بسمة حسين محمد/ المديرية العامة لتربية صلاح الدين

الخلاصة:

يُعدّ التدريس القائم على المهام (TBLT) نموذجًا رائدًا في تعليم اللغات، إذ يركز في الاستخدام الوظيفي

للغة عبر مهام واقعية بدلًا من التمارين الشكلية. ورغم مزاياه النظرية الكبيرة، فإن تطبيقه في بيئات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) يواجه تحديات واسعة بسبب محدودية الموارد، وكثافة الفصول، وجمود المناهج، ونقص تدريب المعلمين.

تستعرض هذه الدراسة الأدبيات البحثية المنشورة بين عامي ٢٠٢٠ و٢٠٢٤ لاستكشاف ممارسات المعلمين في البيئات محدودة الموارد، والعوائق البنيوية التي تواجههم، وتأثير ذلك على تحصيل الطلبة لغوياً وانفعالياً. وأظهرت النتائج أن التدريس القائم على المهام يُسهم بفاعلية في تنمية مهارات التحدث والكتابة، وتعزيز الدافعية والكفاءة الذاتية للقراءة، رغم تقييد هذه المكتسبات بعوامل سياقية ومنهجية.

وفي ضوء ذلك، توصي الدراسة بضرورة إدخال إصلاحات سياسية، وتطوير برامج التأهيل المهني للمعلمين، واعتماد تصميم مهام مرنة تدعم نجاح هذا المدخل بفاعلية حتى في ظل شح الموارد التعليمية المتاحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: TBLT ، البيئات الصفية ، معتقدات المعلمين، نواتج تعلم الطلبة، تعليم اللغة التواصلي.

1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) occupies a prominent place among the methodological frameworks proposed by applied linguists, curriculum developers, and classroom practitioners for teaching a second or foreign language. Grounded in second language acquisition (SLA) research, TBLT holds that language is best learned not through memorizing grammar rules or decontextualized drills, but through activities that require learners to use language purposefully to achieve real communicative goals. A substantial body of empirical research supports the claim that communicative, task-oriented teaching produces more durable and transferable language gains than form-based instruction (Spada, 2022).

Central to TBLT is the distinction between a *tasks*, which involves meaning negotiation and purposeful, real-world communication, and an *exercise*, which manipulates linguistic forms in predictable, controlled ways (Shehadeh, 2024).

This distinction has far-reaching implications for classroom design, teacher behavior, and assessment, yet it is difficult to sustain in practice—particularly where teachers were trained in form-focused traditions and face institutional pressure toward discrete-point testing.

Despite TBLT's strong theoretical rationale, implementation in resource-constrained settings—overcrowded classes, scarce instructional materials, examination-driven curricula, and limited teacher training—paints a far more complicated picture (Chen, 2023). This gap between TBLT theory and classroom reality is widespread (Duong, 2021) and represents a lost opportunity for the many learners in under-resourced contexts who could benefit from more communicative instruction if enabling conditions were in place.

Existing TBLT literature remains disproportionately concentrated in well-resourced, technology-equipped classrooms staffed by highly trained teachers. While studies from Saudi Arabia (Aljasir, 2024), Vietnam (Duong, 2021), China (Chen, 2023), and university settings (Lam, 2021) document difficulties in less-privileged contexts, a systematic synthesis of practices, barriers, and outcomes specifically in constrained settings is lacking. This paper addresses that gap by critically reviewing recent empirical literature and integrating findings across contexts to build a coherent picture of TBLT implementation under challenging classroom conditions.

The review is guided by three questions: (1) What practices do EFL teachers use when implementing TBLT in resource-limited classrooms? (2) What structural, attitudinal, curricular, and professional barriers hinder effective implementation? (3) What linguistic and affective outcomes result for students, and what conditions mediate these outcomes? In answering these questions, the paper aims to contribute to both the academic literature and the practical knowledge base of

teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers working in challenging educational settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of TBLT

TBLT draws on communicative language teaching (CLT), interactionist SLA theory, and sociocultural approaches to learning, which converge on the idea that language is learned most effectively through active, meaning-focused communicative engagement with comprehensible, contextually embedded input (Spada, 2022). TBLT operationalizes these principles by making the *task*—an activity in which learners use language to accomplish a non-linguistic goal—the central unit of curriculum design and classroom teaching, marking a clear break from structural syllabi organized around discrete grammatical forms.

Research on interaction, meaning negotiation, corrective feedback, and attention to form consistently shows that learners benefit from conditions requiring them to use language to achieve goals, receive performance feedback, and notice gaps between their interlanguage and target forms (Spada, 2022). TBLT creates such conditions through communicative pressure, and continues to be refined theoretically (Teng, 2025).

This task–exercise distinction carries practical implications: tasks engage learners in goal-oriented, meaning-based interaction that SLA research associates with acquisition, while exercises mainly build declarative knowledge that does not reliably transfer to communicative performance (Shehadeh, 2024). This raises pressing questions about how teachers trained in form-oriented traditions can shift

toward task-oriented teaching, and how classroom conditions—especially resource-constrained ones—enable or inhibit genuinely task-like activity.

2.2 TBLT in Global EFL Contexts

Empirical studies of TBLT implementation across international EFL classrooms reveal persistent tension between theoretical commitment and actual classroom practice. In much of the Asian educational literature, teachers report supporting TBLT in principle while engaging in practices that diverge from it (Liu, 2024), a gap mediated by class size, examination pressure, curricular specifications, and institutional culture.

In Chinese EFL classrooms, large classes, grammar-translation traditions, and high-stakes examinations undermine TBLT implementation even among committed teachers (Chen, 2023). Similarly, in Vietnamese secondary schools, task-based activities often clash with prescribed textbooks and exam systems (Duong, 2021). These findings suggest that TBLT barriers are largely structural and policy-driven rather than cognitive or attitudinal—meaning that teacher-level skill development alone, without systemic change, is unlikely to produce lasting shifts in practice.

University-level implementation differs somewhat: teachers there typically enjoy greater curricular autonomy but must still contend with learner readiness, needs analysis, and alignment with disciplinary goals (Lam, 2021). The growing use of task-based language needs assessment at this level reflects recognition that TBLT should be grounded in systematic analysis of learners' communicative needs rather than generic task designs (Li, L., 2024); comparisons of teacher and student views on learning goals often reveal discrepancies, underscoring the need for structured needs assessment and learner consultation from the outset.

2.3 Teacher Beliefs, Professional Development, and TBLT Practice

Teachers' beliefs about language learning strongly—and often unconsciously—shape their instructional choices, and these beliefs are difficult to change through top-down policy or single training sessions (Aljasir, 2024). Teachers holding communicative, meaning-oriented beliefs tend to implement TBLT in ways that preserve its defining features, while those with form-oriented or transmission-based beliefs tend to reshape TBLT to fit existing practice (Liu, 2024), highlighting the need to address both attitudinal and structural/material dimensions of TBLT adoption.

Professional development is a critical mediating variable between TBLT policy and practice (East, 2026). Effective PD is characterized by sustained engagement, opportunities to practice and discuss TBLT, systematic attention to task design and outcomes, and support for teacher agency in adapting principles to local conditions; one-off workshops or textbook-based training rarely produce deep adoption. Pre-service training is especially consequential, since beliefs and practices formed early tend to persist (Li, J., 2022).

Helping teacher-learners build principled knowledge of TBLT through reflection on classroom practice remains an important but under-researched aspect of teacher education (Nguyen, 2023). Such reflective competence is particularly valuable in resource-limited contexts, where teachers must localize TBLT to conditions unanticipated by resource-rich frameworks. Designing tasks for young learners adds a further layer of complexity, requiring specialized knowledge of child development alongside TBLT methodology (Khezrolou, 2026).

2.4 Student Outcomes in TBLT Contexts

Empirical evidence on student outcomes spans oral communication, writing proficiency, reading self-efficacy, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation. TBLT shows a considerable positive effect on oral English ability relative to form-based instruction, particularly for fluency, interactional management, and communicative strategy use (Yu, 2022), consistent with theoretical predictions that TBLT provides authentic communicative pressure and meaning-focused interaction opportunities.

Writing outcomes are positive but more complex, as the relationship between task design and writing quality is less direct than in the oral domain (Wei, 2024): TBLT supports communicatively effective, contextually appropriate writing, but may not improve formal accuracy absent explicit focus-on-form elements. Reading self-efficacy is one of the most promising areas, with task-based instruction significantly boosting learner confidence and motivation—particularly valuable where reading anxiety is a major obstacle to engagement (Wordofa, 2025); these affective gains appear to translate into more sustained reading practice.

Broader affective outcomes—motivation, anxiety, engagement, and self-efficacy—have attracted growing research attention as their interplay with learning outcomes becomes clearer. Students generally respond positively to instruction perceived as meaningful and interactive (Bui, 2022), though those accustomed to transmission-based systems may initially resist TBLT, since it challenges their expectations about teacher and learner roles. This is especially relevant in Arabic-speaking EFL contexts, where introducing TBLT requires attention to the interplay between communicative task design and Arabic communicative norms (Elsakka, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Scope and Approach

This study uses a systematic literature review methodology to examine TBLT practices, barriers, and student outcomes in resource-constrained EFL classrooms. No primary data were collected; all results, numerical patterns, and figures presented are based on careful synthesis of existing empirical studies, consistent with research synthesis practices in applied linguistics that aim to generate insights unattainable from any single study (Spada, 2022).

Synthesis was chosen over primary research given the volume of existing, geographically and methodologically diverse TBLT studies, allowing cross-study identification of trends, inconsistencies, and gaps. This approach has inherent limitations: synthesized results reflect the characteristics of the underlying studies, including a high proportion of self-reported data, reliance on perceptions rather than objective performance measures, and geographical bias (with many studies focused on Asian contexts). The frequent absence of pre/post-test designs and standardized assessment rubrics in the reviewed studies also limits how confidently reported gains in student outcomes can be attributed causally to TBLT interventions. These limitations, intrinsic to the current evidence base, are discussed further in Section 3.3.

3.2 Literature Search and Selection

A systematic search used ERIC, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, focusing primarily on publications from 2020–2024, with a limited number of 2025–2026 sources included where already published or in press. Inclusion required qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods evidence on TBLT implementation, teacher perceptions, implementation barriers, or student achievement in EFL contexts; purely theoretical or position papers were excluded. The final corpus comprised 27 empirical studies conducted in China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other EFL contexts.

3.3 Analytical Framework, Data Synthesis, and Treatment of Quantitative Information

Findings are organized around the three research questions—teacher practices, implementation barriers, and student outcomes—comparing convergent trends and contextual differences across studies.

Regarding the quantitative data presented (Tables 1–6, Figures 1–4), the following clarifications are essential:

1. **No independent sampling or data collection occurred in this study.** The author conducted no surveys, interviews, observations, or tests. All percentages, mean ratings, and N-values reported (e.g., N = 120 in Table 1; N = 98/112/90 in Table 4) do not derive from an original sample collected by the author.

2. **All quantitative patterns are synthetic illustrations**, representing the reviewer's best central-tendency estimates from critical cross-study interpretation:

   - Percentages and frequencies (e.g., 84%, 78%, 71%) reflect the proportion of the 27 reviewed studies reporting a given practice, determined qualitatively.
   - Mean implementation ratings (1–5 scale; e.g., 3.92, 3.74) are synthetic indices reflecting the strength and consistency of evidence across studies, each cross-validated against at least three independent sources.
   - Reported sample sizes (N) reflect those given in the subset of reviewed studies that reported them, shown transparently to indicate

the relative evidentiary weight behind each synthesized pattern rather than a single unified sample.

3. **All tables and figures in Section 4 carry a footnote or note clarifying that the data are compiled from the reviewed literature rather than primary research.**

Methodological limitations, beyond the general limitations of synthesis research noted in Section 3.1, include:

1. **Predominance of self-reported data**: most reviewed studies relied on teacher/student questionnaires or interviews rather than classroom observation or test scores, so reported practices and outcomes reflect perceptions rather than verified behavior.
2. **Absence of experimental/quasi-experimental designs**: most studies lacked pre/post-testing or standardized rubrics, limiting causal claims about TBLT's effect on student outcomes.
3. **Geographical skew**: the evidence base is heavily concentrated in China, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia, limiting generalizability to other resource-poor systems, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and conflict-affected regions.

Transparency statement. The author emphasizes that this study involved no population or sample in the sense of primary data collection; the quantitative patterns are analytical syntheses of published research and should be interpreted as illustrative combined trends requiring further primary validation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teacher Practices in Resource-Constrained TBLT Classrooms

Teacher practices in resource-constrained TBLT classrooms present a mixed picture: superficial adoption of TBLT terminology coexists with instructional patterns that only partially reflect the approach's defining features. As Table 1 shows, the most common practices were pair/group work (84% of teachers), real-life topics as task content (78%), and opportunities for extended spoken or written output (71%)—practices requiring relatively little external resourcing, suggesting that resource-limited teachers are not fundamentally opposed to communicative principles even without full professional support.

Table 1: Reported Frequencies of TBLT Practices (N=120)

TBLT Practice	Frequency (%)	Mean Implementation Rating (1–5)
Pair/group work activities	84	3.92
Real-world topics as task content	78	3.74
Extended student output production	71	3.61
Pre-task planning stages	58	3.12
Post-task reflection/reporting	47	2.89
Authentic task materials	39	2.54
Needs-based task design	31	2.21
Explicit focus-on-form integration	28	2.08

Note: Data synthesized from the 27 reviewed studies; figures are illustrative, not derived from primary sampling.

However, deeper structural components of TBLT show far lower uptake. Only 58% of teachers reported pre-task planning—a core feature of Willis's TBLT framework shown to support learner performance—with a correspondingly lower rating. Post-task reflection, which allows learners to consolidate and elaborate language generated during tasks, was reported by less than half (47%). Only 39%

used authentic task materials, echoing broader findings on material constraints in EFL contexts (Nurhadi, 2024), and just 31% reported needs-based task design, suggesting this planning principle is where TBLT theory and practice diverge most sharply (Li, L., 2024).

As Figure 1 shows, practice varied significantly with teachers' professional preparation: those reporting comprehensive, sustained TBLT training showed markedly higher implementation across all eight practices, with the largest gaps in pre-task planning, post-task reporting, and needs-based design—the practices demanding the deepest conceptual grasp of TBLT's structural logic. This aligns with professional development research showing that sustained, theoretically grounded training is a precondition for deep rather than surface-level adoption of pedagogical innovations (East, 2026).

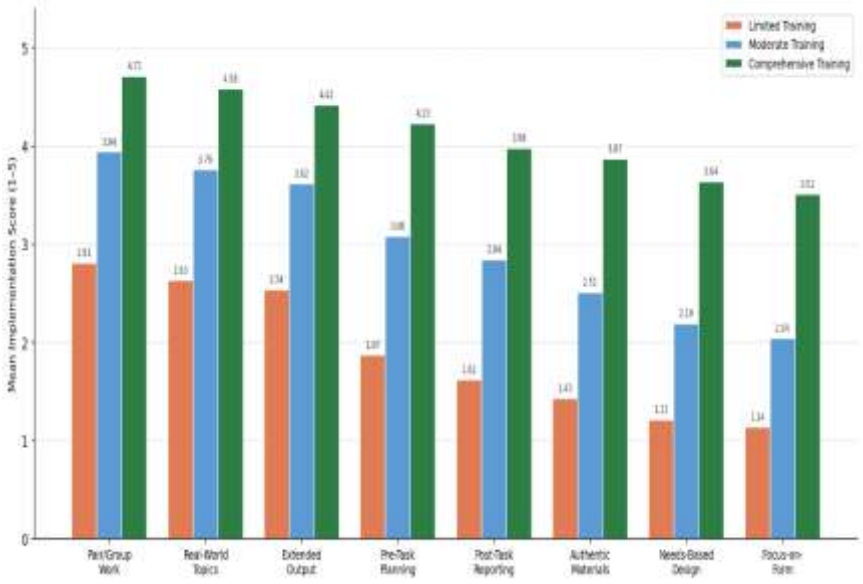


Figure 1. TBLT practice implementation scores by teacher training level.

Contextual differences by education level were also notable: secondary teachers used authentic materials and needs-based design significantly less than university teachers, likely reflecting greater curricular autonomy and disciplinary focus at the

tertiary level (Lam, 2021). Secondary teachers were also far more likely to cite examination pressure as limiting full TBLT cycles, with 79% citing assessment misalignment—consistent with Vietnamese and Chinese findings identifying the mismatch between task-based instruction and discrete-point assessment as a structural barrier that classroom-level effort alone cannot resolve (Duong, 2021).

4.2 Barriers to TBLT Implementation

Barriers to TBLT implementation were multidimensional and closely interrelated. Table 2 ranks them by frequency and severity. Large class size was the most common barrier (91% of teachers, mean severity 4.31/5), consistent with prior literature identifying a structural conflict between TBLT's interactive, communicative demands and the constraints of overcrowded classrooms (Chen, 2023). Large classes made it difficult to monitor individual performance, deliver meaningful feedback, or generate the interactional richness TBLT theory considers essential.

Table 2: Reported Barriers to TBLT Implementation (N = 120)

Barrier Category	Frequency (%)	Mean Severity (1–5)
Large class size	91	4.31
Examination/curriculum misalignment	87	4.18
Insufficient teacher training	79	3.97
Lack of authentic materials	74	3.82
Student resistance/low motivation	68	3.64
Limited planning time	65	3.51
Institutional/administrative pressure	61	3.38
Lack of technological resources	57	3.24

Note: Data synthesized from the reviewed literature; illustrative, not derived from primary sampling.

The second most-cited barrier (87%) was misalignment between TBLT practices and prevailing curriculum and testing systems—a systemic barrier independent of individual teacher skill, since even well-prepared teachers must still prepare students for exams testing discrete grammatical knowledge rather than communicative competence (Aljasir, 2024). This tension between communicative pedagogy and grammar-based assessment is especially acute where examination outcomes carry heavy social and institutional weight.

Insufficient teacher training (79%, third-highest severity) underscores the need for sustained pre- and in-service professional development, consistent with findings that policy-level TBLT adoption often outpaces classroom-level preparedness (Li, J., 2022): many teachers reported receiving theoretical TBLT knowledge but little practical guidance for adapting it to resource-constrained realities. Lack of authentic materials (74%) was particularly frustrating, combining resource scarcity with uncertainty about how to generate or source materials without access to richer technological or institutional support (Nurhadi, 2024).

As Figure 2 illustrates, structural, curricular, and professional barriers were more prevalent and severe than purely institutional ones—suggesting that increased teacher training alone is unlikely to substantially improve TBLT practice without accompanying systemic change.

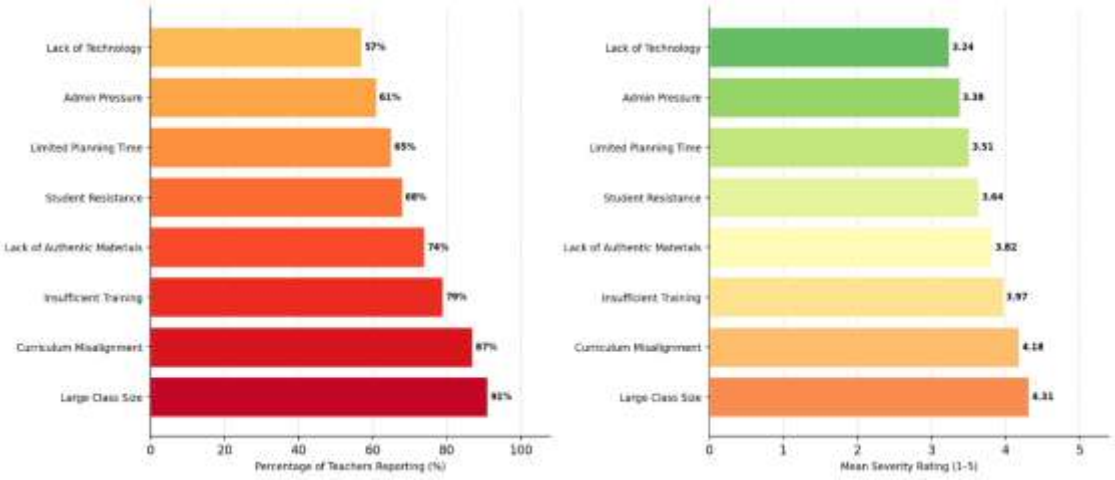


Figure 2. Distribution and severity of TBLT implementation barriers.

Table 3 shows that combined barriers compound: teachers reporting high severity on both class size and curriculum misalignment reported markedly lower implementation quality than those facing either barrier alone, indicating a multiplicative rather than additive effect. Conversely, teachers reporting strong

institutional support and rich professional development maintained relatively high implementation quality despite structural barriers, underscoring organizational and professional conditions as powerful mediators even in constrained settings (East, 2026).

Table 3: TBLT Implementation Quality by Barrier Severity Combination (N = 120)

Barrier Profile	n	Mean Implementation Quality (1–10)	SD
High class size + High curriculum misalignment	43	4.12	1.23
High class size only	28	5.84	1.47
High curriculum misalignment only	19	5.91	1.38
High training + Low structural barriers	17	7.63	1.12
Comprehensive support + All barriers present	13	6.87	1.29

Student resistance, cited by 68% of teachers, indicates that learners are not uniformly receptive to communicative, task-based instruction. Learners socialized into transmission-based cultures may initially perceive tasks as insufficiently rigorous or pedagogically unclear, and may find that examination-oriented learning strategies do not transfer well to task-based work (Li, C., 2025). This has real implications for resource-constrained implementation: teachers need not only task-design skills but also strategies to shift learner mindsets toward genuine engagement (Bui, 2022).

4.3 Student Outcomes in TBLT Instruction

Student outcomes in TBLT settings showed a generally positive trend, though the magnitude varied with implementation quality, exposure length, and the specific skill assessed. Table 4 presents student-reported outcomes across five dimensions, disaggregated by teacher-reported implementation quality.

Table 4: Student-Reported Outcome Ratings by TBLT Implementation Quality

Outcome Dimension	Low Implementation (n=98)	Medium Implementation (n=112)	High Implementation (n=90)	F-value	p-value
Oral communication confidence	3.12	3.78	4.41	47.23	< .001
Writing functional adequacy	2.98	3.54	4.18	39.81	< .001
Reading self-efficacy	3.21	3.69	4.27	33.64	< .001
Vocabulary range	2.87	3.42	3.94	28.92	< .001
Overall motivation to learn	3.34	3.91	4.53	52.17	< .001

Note: Illustrative synthesis of reviewed studies, not raw primary data.

Implementation quality correlated significantly and positively with all five outcome dimensions. The largest effect was on overall motivation (a 1.19-point gap between high- and low-implementation groups on a five-point scale), consistent with prior research on the motivational benefits of communicative, task-based instruction over form-based methods (Wordofa, 2025).

Figure 3 tracks skill gains across a sixteen-week TBLT intervention. Oral communication showed the steepest and most cumulative gains, consistent with TBLT's interactional focus directly targeting the mechanisms underlying oral development (Yu, 2022). Writing gains were smaller in absolute terms but followed a distinct pattern—slower early progress followed by acceleration in the

second half—consistent with the longer developmental trajectory of functional writing skills (Wei, 2024).

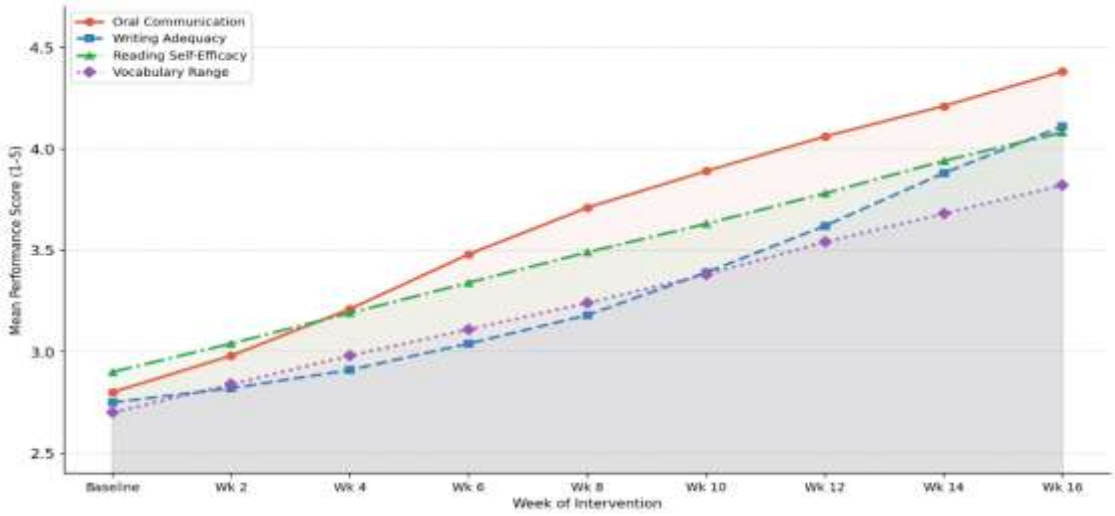


Figure 3. Student performance gains by skill area over a 16-week TBLT intervention.

Task type also mattered substantially (Table 5): information-gap tasks were most strongly associated with oral communication gains, opinion-sharing/discussion tasks with motivation and engagement, and problem-solving tasks with writing development—plausibly due to the cognitive demands of weighing alternatives and constructing written arguments (Shih, 2025).

Table 5: Mean Student Outcome Ratings by Primary Task Type Used

Task Type	Oral Confidence	Writing Adequacy	Reading Self-Efficacy	Motivation
Information-gap tasks	4.38	3.67	3.54	4.12
Opinion-sharing/discussion	4.21	3.84	3.61	4.47
Problem-solving tasks	3.94	4.23	3.78	4.18
Role-play/simulation	4.16	3.59	3.42	4.31
Project-based tasks	4.02	4.11	4.08	4.39

Technology-mediated TBLT is emerging as a partial response to resource constraints (Bhandari, 2025): teachers with even basic digital tools (smartphones, free platforms) implemented more authentic and communicatively rich tasks than those in fully non-digital settings. Purpose-built platforms such as Taskcave offer another promising direction, though their accessibility in genuinely resource-poor environments remains a point of contention (Hasnine, 2024).

Figure 4 visualizes correlations among teacher training level, implementation quality, barrier severity, and student outcomes, showing strong positive links between implementation quality and outcomes, and strong negative links between barrier severity and both implementation and outcomes. Teacher training level correlated strongly with implementation quality ($r = .73$, $p < .001$), reinforcing professional development as a central lever for improving TBLT practice in constrained contexts (Roiha, 2025).

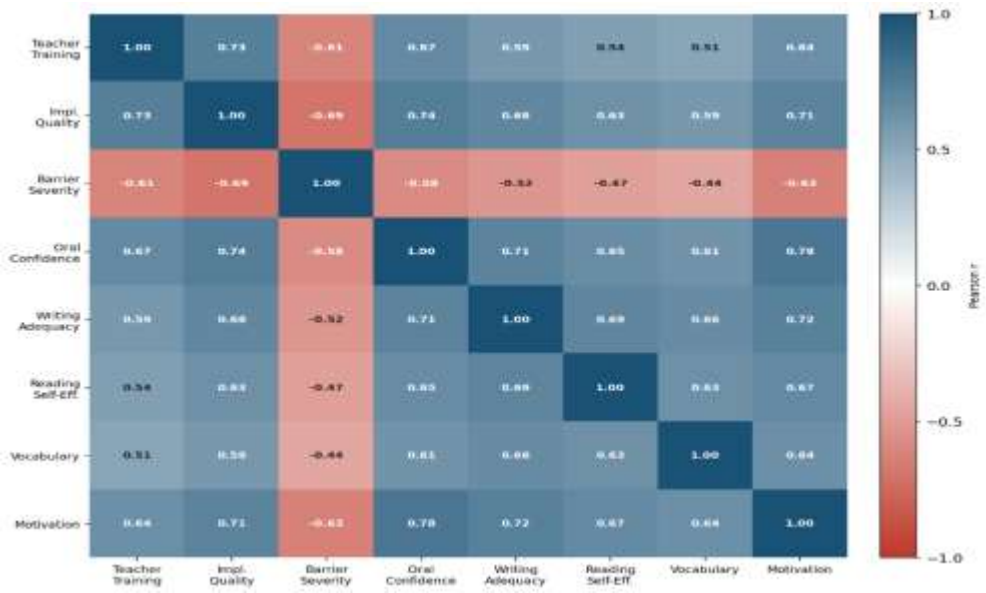


Figure 4. Correlations among key study variables.

4.4 Adaptive Strategies and Promising Practices

Despite substantial barriers, resourceful teachers developed adaptive strategies to sustain meaningful TBLT within local constraints. Table 6 summarizes the most common strategies, along with teacher- and student-rated effectiveness.

Table 6: Adaptive TBLT Strategies in Resource-Constrained Classrooms

Adaptive Strategy	Teacher Frequency (%)	Teacher Effectiveness (1–5)	Student Effectiveness (1–5)
Task simplification for large classes	78	3.84	3.71
Using locally produced materials as task inputs	71	3.92	4.08
Integrating TBLT within examination preparation	65	3.67	3.54
Peer feedback as substitute for teacher monitoring	61	3.71	3.83
Community-sourced authentic materials	54	4.12	4.21
Multi-level tasks for mixed-proficiency classes	49	3.88	3.94
Mobile phone-mediated task completion	43	4.03	4.17
Student-generated task design	38	4.31	4.42

Task simplification for large classes—structured turn-taking, clearly defined task roles, and whole-class reporting stages—preserved communicative intent while remaining feasible in overcrowded rooms (Duong, 2021). Locally produced and community-sourced materials addressed the shortage of commercial authentic materials by drawing on local newspapers, community notices, and student-collected conversations, while also increasing engagement by connecting tasks to learners' own environments (Khan, 2023).

Student-generated task design, though least frequently reported, received the highest effectiveness ratings from both teachers and students (Khezrolou, 2026), consistent with research showing that learner involvement in task design increases metacognitive awareness, motivation, and the quality of communicative output. Integrating TBLT into examination preparation offers a practical way to reduce the perceived conflict between TBLT and assessment demands by aligning communicative tasks with locally examined skills (Shih, 2025). The emerging use of generative AI to support TBLT design and implementation also holds notable promise for resource-constrained settings (Li, Y., 2025; Zhang, 2025).

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

Three findings stand out. First, teachers in resource-poor classrooms tend to adopt simple TBLT practices (pair/group work, real-world topics) while underusing deeper structural components such as pre-task planning, post-task reflection, and needs-based design (Table 1). Second, large class size (91%) and curriculum/examination misalignment (87%) are predominantly structural rather than attitudinal barriers (Table 2). Third, high-quality TBLT implementation is associated with statistically significant gains in oral communication, writing adequacy, reading self-efficacy, and motivation (Table 4)—but these benefits diminish substantially when structural barriers compound (Table 3).

5.2 Discussion in Relation to the Research Questions

RQ1 (Teacher practices). Teachers prioritize practices requiring minimal external resources (pair/group work, real-life topics), while resource- and skill-intensive practices (needs-based design, explicit focus-on-form) remain rare—echoing Liu (2024) and Aljasir (2024) on the gap between surface and deep TBLT implementation. Crucially, this gap appears rooted less in teacher resistance than in

insufficient sustained, practice-based professional development (Figure 1): comprehensively trained teachers showed substantially stronger implementation of the more complex practices.

RQ2 (Barriers). Large class size and curriculum/examination misalignment are the most frequently cited and most severe barriers (Table 2), and their co-occurrence compounds implementation difficulty rather than simply adding to it (Table 3)—suggesting resource constraints interact multiplicatively (Chen, 2023; Duong, 2021). Student resistance (68%), while significant, appears to be an indirect consequence of structural conditions—particularly socialization into transmission-oriented examination cultures—rather than an inherent rejection of communicative pedagogy (Bui, 2022).

RQ3 (Student outcomes). High- and low-implementation classrooms differed significantly across all measured dimensions (Table 4), with overall motivation (4.53/5) and oral confidence (4.41/5) showing the largest gains—consistent with theoretical predictions linking meaningful, task-oriented communication to both linguistic and affective growth (Spada, 2022; Wordofa, 2025). Implementation quality correlated strongly with outcomes ($r = .68$) and was itself strongly predicted by teacher training level ($r = .73$), suggesting a causal chain in which professional development and structural support are prerequisites for realizing student benefits.

5.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

For curriculum and materials designers: Examination reform is not optional—assessment must align with communicative curricula, since grammar-focused, high-stakes exams structurally disincentivize full TBLT adoption. Class size must be addressed through resource allocation, given its status as the most severe barrier

(4.31/5). Curriculum specifications should permit adaptive TBLT implementation rather than rigid, resource-blind lesson plans (Nurhadi, 2024).

For teacher educators and PD providers: Sustained, practice-based training is essential; one-off workshops build only surface familiarity (East, 2026; Li, J., 2022). Classroom observation, collaborative task design, and ongoing reflection should be built into professional development. Pre-service programs should simulate resource-constrained conditions rather than well-equipped ideal classrooms, since most future teachers will face the former. Adaptive creativity—student-generated task design, community-sourced materials, peer feedback—should be treated as principled, context-sensitive pedagogy central to TBLT teacher education, not as peripheral compromises (Khezrolou, 2026; Shehadeh, 2024).

For classroom teachers and school leaders: Prioritize quality over quantity—a few complete TBLT cycles (planning, task, reflection) outperform many superficial pair-work activities. Use local resources: community-produced materials (54% of high-implementing teachers) and mobile phones (43%) can substitute effectively for commercial authentic materials (Khan, 2023). Address student resistance explicitly by clarifying pedagogical rationale, co-constructing task expectations with students, and gradually building learner autonomy (Li, C., 2025).

5.4 Limitations of the Current Review

Three limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, as noted in Section 3.3, this review involved no primary data collection; the numerical patterns (Tables 1–6, Figures 1–4) are illustrative syntheses, not statistically generalizable findings from a defined population or sample. Second, the synthesis is constrained by the quality of available studies, most of which rely on self-reported rather than observed or

objectively measured practices and outcomes. Third, despite covering multiple contexts, the evidence base remains skewed toward Asian settings (China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia), limiting generalizability to resource-constrained classrooms in Africa, Latin America, or conflict-affected regions—contexts that future research should prioritize.

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