A Case Study of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

in a

Hong Kong Secondary School

Francis Kam Cheung Lee

Ed.D. Thesis

The University of Technology, Sydney

2008

A Case Study of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

in a

Hong Kong Secondary School

Francis Kam Cheung Lee

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Education
at the University of Technology, Sydney
for the degree of

Doctor of Education

2008

Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signed: Production Note: Signature removed prior to publication.

Francis Kam Cheung Lee

Acknowledgments

This study would never have been completed without the support of many people. I can only mention a few here. First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest and sincere gratitude to my Principal Supervisor, Professor Diana Slade, for her guidance and invaluable advice for the past four years. She has been extremely willing to share with me her immensely rich knowledge not just on language teaching, but also on diverse areas of applied linguistics.

My Alternate Supervisor, Associate Professor Hermine Scheeres, has been very supportive and understanding. She has also given me insights and constructive guidance on different aspects of this research.

My thanks also go to the former Doctor of Education Programme Coordinator, Professor Alison Lee, who offered advice to my research design at the early stage of my professional doctorate programme and Dr. Guenter Plum, who offered editorial guidance in my later writing stage.

I would like to thank the principal and the English teachers of the school that was the site of my study. They allowed me to conduct in-depth research into their professional practice, and devoted much of their invaluable time in the process when I collected data. Without their support, the study would be inconclusive.

I must extend my appreciation to my wife, Maria Wong, who gave unbound encouragement and patience while I was carrying out this study. I owe my son, Justin, hundreds of untold bedside stories over the last four years. With their support, I had the strength to overcome the difficulties in completing this study.

Last but not least, I also devote this study to all English language curriculum developers and teachers who are determined to improve English language teaching and learning in Hong Kong.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abstract

The current thesis is a case study of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in a Hong Kong school context. Its contributions are two-fold. Firstly, it is an empirical investigation of the actual implementation of TBLT, thereby contributing to the literature in this area. To date, the literature has focused on TBLT either as an effective syllabus or as a set of detailed methodology principles and activities (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001; Candlin, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Nunan, 2004, Willis & Willis, 2007). The significance of this thesis is, therefore, its empirical focus. Secondly, the original contribution of this thesis is its focus on the Hong Kong context, in particular, describing and critiquing the relationship between the Hong Kong curriculum framework and the perception and practice of TBLT in a local secondary school.

The subjects came from a government secondary school in Hong Kong. They included ten English teachers and 158 students. The data were collected through a triangulated approach comprising surveys, lesson observations and personal interviews. The findings indicate that both the teacher and student subjects generally had favourable attitudes towards TBLT. The findings also reflect significant discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their actual practices. Suggestions have been made to explain such discrepancies, for example, misconceptions of TBLT by teachers and poor learning motivation of students. This study also reveals that the school selected for the study lacked favourable conditions for the implementation of TBLT.

Not only does this study confirm the value of TBLT in a Hong Kong context, but it also enriches the literature by presenting an insider's perspective of TBLT. Although the findings could conclude that TBLT is well received by both teachers and students, it was also found that teacher training for TBLT was insufficient and students were not well informed of their active role in the English language teaching and learning process. In

light of these findings, the effectiveness of TBLT remains a goal rather than an accomplished fact in this school.

This study is significant for the professional development and training of English language teachers as it reveals and describes the discrepancies that exist between the teachers' perceptions and practices. Some factors that contributed to such discrepancies were beyond the teachers' control, *e.g.*, students' learning motivation and the 'washback' effect from public examinations, *etc.* As both students and teachers expressed their preference for TBLT, further studies of implementation strategies of school-based TBLT are desirable.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Second language teaching is an immensely complex activity. Among the approaches and methodologies developed over the last few decades, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is praised as an ideal methodology. Hundreds of second language research titles by applied linguists have been centred on TBLT. As a promising methodology, TBLT has become the prime concern to most English language teachers in Hong Kong.

Teachers' attitudes are very significant determinants to achieve success in second language teaching. In reality, previous studies (Ellis, 2003, Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Karavas, 1996, Kennedy, 1991, Nunan, 2004) show that there is always a discrepancy between the second language teachers' expressed attitudes and their actual classroom practices. The current study set out to investigate the attitudes of teachers and students towards TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. It also served as an empirical investigation of TBLT implementation in the case study school. In particular it aimed to explore the favourable factors and perceived difficulties of TBLT implementation so as to provide implications for the development of English language curriculum and teachers' professional development in Hong Kong. This thesis, comprising seven chapters, is a comprehensive report of the study.

The first chapter, Chapter 1, presents the overall background of the study. Section 1.1 describes what the thesis is about and gives a brief summary of the study. Sections 1.2 and 1.3 present the two dimensions to this background: the development of second language pedagogy and the contextual development of English language teaching in Hong Kong. They are crucial for this study as they justify how the research questions are established and why answering these questions is important for the future curriculum development of Hong Kong English language education. Section 1.4

presents the research questions. The point of the whole study is to address these questions so that the findings can ultimately contribute to the literature and knowledge in the area of TBLT. Section 1.5 presents an outline of the thesis chapters. This outline provides an overview of the study and makes reference to different issues and topics covered in individual chapters.

1.1 Preamble

This case study of TBLT was conducted in a secondary school in Hong Kong. TBLT is considered the official teaching methodology in the present English language curriculum documents for Hong Kong schools (CDC, 1999a, 2002b; CDC–HKEAA, 2007). Accordingly, all English teachers in Hong Kong should be implementing TBLT in their lessons. However, transforming the policy into practice is a subtle process that should never be underestimated in any real educational contexts. Applied linguistic studies (Alexander, 2000; Allwright, 1986; Burton & Nunan, 1986; Feez, 1998; Karavas, 1996; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987) over the last two decades have queried the faithfulness of second language teachers to curriculum documents. The studies cited above confirmed that widespread transformation of the official policies have occurred due to local conditions and the personal beliefs of teachers. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that multiple perspectives on TBLT are also held and multiple implementations of TBLT have also taken place in Hong Kong English language classrooms.

The study explored the attitudes of teachers and students towards TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. The data were obtained through a triangulated approach comprising questionnaire surveys administered to teachers and students, lesson observations and personal interviews with selected teachers. The details of the research methodology are described in Chapter 4 and the findings and analysis are presented in

Chapter 5. The data from the questionnaires and teacher interviews revealed whether the teachers and students held favourable attitudes towards TBLT. The lesson observations provided data which showed whether there were discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their practices of TBLT. The personal interviews allowed me to clarify many aspects of the data obtained by means of the other two research methods. The findings of these research methods concerned both the favourable aspects and the perceived difficulties of implementing TBLT in this school. Apart from the research questions identified early in the research, the data also yielded perspectives on and insights into second language teaching in other school contexts, and these are discussed in Chapter 6. The last chapter, Chapter 7, summarises the study, presents conclusions and makes recommendations for future research in the area of TBLT. All in all, this study contributes to the literature of applied linguistics. Chapter 7 also discusses some implications for the development of the English language curriculum and for the professional development of English language teachers in Hong Kong. This research is intended to be a useful reference for all teachers of English in Hong Kong and in other contexts where English is taught as a second language.

1.2 Theoretical Background

TBLT is an innovation in modern second language pedagogy. It was first introduced in the current Hong Kong English language syllabus for Hong Kong secondary schools in 1999 (CDC, 1999a). This introduction has affected all stakeholders in the school English curriculum in Hong Kong, especially English language teachers. Before TBLT, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was the official English language teaching methodology, which it had been since the release of the previous English language curriculum in 1983.

CLT had been widely accepted and adopted in Hong Kong for decades. The central point of CLT is to focus on the development of learners' communicative competence, rather than just their grammatical competence. As this earlier English language curriculum had been implemented for years, from 1983 to 1999, English teachers in Hong Kong were equipped to practise CLT in their classrooms. In CLT, teachers are required to design the language learning activities that aim to facilitate realistic communications. In theory, the CLT classrooms should contain all communicative activities that focus on meanings, rather than simply grammatical forms (Hymes, 1972). The role of teachers is to design these activities for students so as to build up the students' communicative competence. By contrast, TBLT employs a stricter definition of the tasks that are to be carried out in language classrooms than CLT.

According to Littlewood (1999), TBLT should be regarded as one particular approach to implementing the broader communicative approach. The aim of TBLT is to develop students' ability to communicate through their engagement in meaningful and communicative tasks. These are activities in which the target language is used by learners for a communicative goal to achieve an outcome (Willis, 1996). Students are left with the initiative to choose appropriate target language items and to reach the communication goal.

It is also considered that TBLT has higher cognitive demand on students. As the distinction drawn by Skehan (1998) on cognitive familiarity and cognitive processing, some tasks need students the ability to work out solutions to task on line (cognitive processing); whereas some tasks need their ability to access packaged solutions to tasks (cognitive familiarity). Different tasks thus have different degree of task complexity. Some tasks require 'existing well-organised chunks of knowledge to be retrieved and mobilised for task performance, whereas some tasks have significant difficulty for

students to manipulate the elements to achieve a solution that the task requires' (Nunan, 2004:66). Doyle (1983) also defined four general categories of academic tasks: memory tasks, procedural or routine tasks, comprehension or understanding tasks, and opinion tasks. He argued that each of these categories varied in terms of the cognitive operations required to successfully complete tasks contained therein. In short, different kinds of tasks made different types of cognitive demand (Foster and Skehan, 1997). Therefore TBLT should work better for developing students' communicative competence as well as ability to manage complex and authentic language tasks in real-life situations.

Since the release of the present English language syllabus for Hong Kong secondary schools (CDC, 1999a), TBLT has had a significant impact on all English language teachers in Hong Kong. The term 'Communicative Language Teaching' is no longer mentioned in this curriculum document, though developing learners' communicative competence remains the focus in the entire English language curriculum framework.

> Language learning should be experiential and it should aim at developing learners' communicative competence. The learning process is the priority. The *task-based learning approach* to language learning places emphasis on learning to communicate through purposeful interaction. All in all, *task-based learning* stimulates a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete *meaningful tasks*. (CDC, 1999a:45; emphases mine)

The idea of using TBLT is also stated explicitly in a later curriculum document, the *English Language Curriculum Document Guide* (CDC, 2002b; emphases mine), as follows:

> Learners learn best through *purposeful and contextualised learning tasks. Effective tasks* enable learners to seek and process information, formulate questions and responses, and make connections. They also provide meaningful and purposeful contexts in which learners learn and apply target grammar items and structures. When designing tasks, teachers are encouraged to consider and apply this principle. (CDC 2002b:95; emphases mine)

The latest English language curriculum document, the *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide* (CDC-HKEAA, 2007), was released in January 2007. This guide was jointly published by the two most influential statutory bodies in Hong Kong school education, namely, the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). The former organisation develops and designs the central curriculum for all Hong Kong schools and the latter prescribes the public examination syllabuses and administers the public examinations for Hong Kong school graduates. In this guide, the official position on the use of TBLT in Hong Kong schools is also reinforced.

> Language learning should be experiential and it should aim at developing learners' communicative competence. The *task-based approach* to language learning emphasises learning to communicate through purposeful interaction. Through the use of tasks, learners are provided with purposeful contexts and engaged in processes that require them to exercise critical thinking and creativity, explore issues and solutions, and learn to use the language skills and functions, grammar items and structures, vocabulary, tone, style and register for meaningful communication. *The use of tasks* also provides opportunities for the development of language learning strategies, generic

skills, learner independence, and positive values and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning. (CDC-HKEAA, 2007:73; emphases mine)

Although TBLT has such a superior status in the present Hong Kong English language curriculum for schools, it is really naïve to expect that all English language teachers in Hong Kong would conform to it without discrepancies occurring in its implementation. For example, CLT has already been entrenched in the mindset of all Hong Kong English teachers for almost two decades. Henceforth, teachers cannot be expected to put any new pedagogy into practice overnight nor should we expect this English language teaching innovation to be implemented perfectly from any written curriculum policy documents. Thus teachers may interpret TBLT in whatever terms they have perceived it. These days, some English language teachers in Hong Kong simply regard TBLT as a term equivalent or even identical to CLT and they regard any communicative activities as 'tasks'. For example, even mechanical oral drills of greetings between two students can be regarded as tasks for TBLT. Some adopt a product approach. They believe that the final language product is the most important aspect in TBLT so the students are provided a massive input of language structures in the lessons. Students may come up with excellent 'products' without engaging in any forms of meaningful and communicative tasks. TBLT, in this situation, has become old wine in a new bottle, a situation that is not uncommon in many Hong Kong classrooms.

Although it is not always immediately apparent, everything teachers do in the classroom is underpinned by their personal beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of the learning process and the nature of the teaching acts. Teachers' beliefs are also context-specific and influenced by the values and philosophy of the education system of which they are part (Fullan, 1993; Sarason, 1990). So when TBLT is implemented in Hong Kong, it lends itself to respond to all the factors that may shape

its practice within this context. Discrepancies between the theory and practice of TBLT seem unavoidable. TBLT is a relatively new idea to most Hong Kong English language teachers and there is little research on its implementation, especially in Hong Kong contexts. This study therefore set out to investigate the implementation of TBLT in a real Hong Kong school context. It aims to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching in Hong Kong.

This research was carried out through the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) programme offered by the Faculty of Education, the University of Technology, Sydney in Australia. Ed.D. is a professional doctorate and its research differs from the traditional Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) research. The former emphasises the study of professional practice in context while the latter emphasises the development of theoretical know-how in an academic discipline (Lee, Green & Brennan, 2000). Although it is not necessarily the case, it is commonplace to say that the distinction between these is a distinction between 'practice' and 'theory'. Ed.D. provides experienced education professionals with an opportunity to combine high-level coursework studies with research into an aspect of professional practice relevant to their workplace. The current Ed.D. study was designed to investigate how well TBLT was implemented (professional practice) in a specific school context (workplace) in Hong Kong. It aims to identify the factors which contribute to the effective implementation of TBLT from an insider's perspective.

1.3 Contextual Background

Since the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997, the education system in Hong Kong has entered a period of extensive reforms. Innovative ideas such as the 'Application of Information Technology in Education', 'Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning', 'Learning to Learn', 'Project Learning', 'Assessment for

Learning' and 'Reading to Learn' have emerged in the school system. The ultimate goal of the reforms is to better equip the Hong Kong students for a knowledge-based economy in the 21st century (CDC, 2002a).

The highest priority in the current Hong Kong education reform is curriculum reform. New curriculum documents, both teaching and examination syllabuses on different subjects, have been released over the past several years. As one of the eight Key Learning Areas (KLA) in the current Hong Kong school curriculum framework, English Language Education is no exception. The current English language syllabus for Hong Kong secondary schools was developed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC). The present syllabus was officially released in 1999 to replace its previous edition, which had been adopted in Hong Kong schools since 1983. Not long after, the new *English Language Education Key Learning Area (KLA) Curriculum Guide* (CDC, 2002a) provides a new English Language Education curriculum framework for all Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. The most recent curriculum document, the *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide* (CDC-HKEAA, 2007), published in January 2007, has established a clear link between the English language curriculum and assessment frameworks. All these curriculum documents provide the standard in English language pedagogy, syllabus design, learning activities and assessment for teachers and thus had a great impact on the practice of English language teaching in the classrooms. They centre on developing learners' communicative competence, rather than purely on learners' grammatical competence. In particular, they advocate the use of TBLT. As a consequence, how well TBLT is implemented in Hong Kong schools is of pivotal concern to English language curriculum planners, teacher trainers, teachers and all stakeholders in Hong Kong school education.

Although implementing TBLT is a relatively modern trend in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field in Hong Kong, it has been highly regarded in many western countries such as Australia, Britain, New Zealand and the USA over the last decade (Bygate, *et al.* 2001; Candlin, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Littlewood, 1999; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1998 and Willis and Willis, 2007). The education authority of the Hong Kong SAR government is also making great effort to facilitate English language teachers to adopt TBLT in their practice. Many English language teachers in Hong Kong, like many of their counterparts all over the world, are looking forward to implementing this relatively new ELT methodology. Although TBLT has attracted great admiration from ELT practitioners in foreign countries, it is still an innovative idea to Hong Kong English teachers. As Ellis mentioned, 'a pedagogic proposal can be seen as an entirely new idea by the practitioners engaged with it, irrespective of whether this proposal has already been adopted by practitioners operating in different contexts' (Ellis, 2003:321).

According to Nunan's (1988) comment on curriculum analysis, curriculum designers usually focus on the planned curriculum (documents) and the assessed curriculum (examinations) but tend to ignore the implemented curriculum (classroom teaching and learning process). As Parlett and Hamilton (1983:14) explained, curriculum is

> an extremely complex set of processes as it assumes a different form in every situation. Its constituent elements are emphasised and de-emphasised, expanded or truncated, as teachers, administrator, technicians and students interpret or reinterpret the instructional system for their particular settings.

This study set out to investigate how TBLT was implemented in a secondary school in Hong Kong, with the thesis serving as a complete report of the whole research process.

The research questions in Section 1.4 provide the theme of this study and Section 1.5 outlines the content of different chapters in the thesis.

1.4 Research Questions

This research was planned as a case study of TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. Various features of TBLT and tasks were identified in the literature as the foundation for designing the research methods, comprising a Teacher Questionnaire, a Student Questionnaire, a Lesson Observation Checklist and an Interview with questions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via the questionnaires administered to teachers and students, lesson observations as well as personal interviews with a small number of teachers. The findings were discussed in depth so that they ultimately addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of English language teachers towards TBLT?
2. What are the attitudes of English language students towards TBLT?
3. How is TBLT implemented in the selected school?
    a. Are there any discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs and their practice of TBLT, and if so, what are they?
    b. What are the factors contributing to such discrepancies?
4. What are the favourable factors governing the implementation of TBLT in the selected school?
5. What are the perceived difficulties of implementing TBLT in the selected school?
6. What recommendations can be made to make the implementation of TBLT more successful?

1.5 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the whole research. It also presents the relevant background of TBLT in the Hong Kong context and the research questions. Chapter 2 provides a literature review, with a definition of tasks, a history of English language teaching for half a century and the development of TBLT. It also discusses the problems encountered with TBLT and various definitions of tasks as suggested in the literature. Chapter 3 draws on the literature review to furnish a conceptual framework that has been used in arriving at a definition of tasks and TBLT in the Hong Kong context. The contextual factors, such as the policy governing the medium of instruction in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools and the English curriculum are also reviewed.

Chapter 4 first identifies the qualitative research approach used in this study. It then describes the particulars of the participants and the procedures for data collection and analyses. Chapter 5 presents the findings concerning teachers' and students' attitudes towards TBLT. It also describes the discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices. The perceived difficulties and favourable factors of implementing TBLT are also discussed. Chapter 6 discusses features from the data and findings in relation to the research questions. Chapter 7, the final chapter, summarises the results of the study. It discusses the limitations of the adopted approach, states implications and offers recommendations for the implementation of TBLT. The chapter concludes by considering the need for further research into school-based implementation of TBLT in Hong Kong on a larger scale and the need to verify the beliefs of teachers and students concerning their favourable English language teaching methodology.

Having discussed the background of this research, the next chapter reviews the literature relating to TBLT and the features and roles of the language teaching and

learning tasks concerned. It also reviews the history of half a century of English language teaching and, in particular, the development of TBLT and reveals the problems behind the theoretical framework and the implementation of TBLT as reported in recent studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many approaches to language teaching began as reactions to old approaches. Their starting points were often a belief in how languages should not be taught and how the old approaches had failed. One way in which to consider TBLT is therefore to ask what has led linguists and teachers to a state of discontent with the older ELT pedagogies and made them look for something new. Therefore, a critical review of how second language pedagogy has evolved is essential to understanding the conceptual and theoretical framework underpinning TBLT.

Over the years, linguists and language teachers have been in search of the best second language teaching pedagogy for learners. From audio-lingualism in the 1960s, through the theory of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) in the 1970s to CLT in the 1980s, there was a radical swing of the pendulum from form-focussed instruction to meaning-based pedagogy. However, the extreme non-interventionist focus on meaning also had problems and led to further pendulum swings. From the early 1990s onwards, TBLT has been replacing the role of CLT. Nowadays, TBLT is recognised as an ideal second language teaching approach, which accommodates the concerns on form and meaning. To critically examine the developmental process of the second language pedagogy sharpens our eyes to the rationales and conceptual framework underpinning TBLT. Such a history also sheds light on the future development of TBLT.

This chapter begins with an account of half a century of development of English language teaching. The theoretical bases – and their respective problems – of different teaching methodologies are identified. To assemble the construct of TBLT and understand how a task in the sense of TBLT is conceptualised in the literature, Section 2.4 explores various definitions of task in English language teaching and discusses how the conceptualisation of a task leads to different interpretations of TBLT. Throughout

this literature review, the term 'syllabus' is defined as the language items selected to be taught, and the term 'teaching methodology' is defined as a set of procedures employed that enable the language selected to be learned (Widdowson, 1987).

2.1 A Half Century of Language Teaching

2.1.1 Audio-lingualism

In the 1960s, audio-lingualism reached its peak as a way of teaching English as a second or foreign language. Audio-lingualism was primarily an orally-focused approach to language teaching. Extensive oral instructions were used in the process of teaching while the focus was on immediate and accurate speech production with little grammatical explanation. Audio-lingualism was related to highly developed theories in linguistics and behaviourist psychology, and had apparently proved its practical worth in military language training programmes during World War II (Allwright & Bailey, 1991:6).

During that period, audio-lingualism was recommended in Hong Kong as set out in the 1975 *Syllabus for English Language Teaching and Learning* (CDC, 1975). Learning English was viewed as learning its forms, structural features and sentence patterns only. It was believed that learning happened through good habit formation and so mechanical drills, repetition and other habit-forming practices were used to help students learn English. Moreover, grammatical correctness was emphasised and errors were considered undesirable. It was clearly written in the *Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)* that 'mistakes defeat the purpose of any exercise' (CDC, 1975: Preamble). Many English teachers from this era have followed this grammatical approach and some of them are still teaching with such an approach today. Perhaps it is

also due to the fact that these teachers were taught by this approach and see themselves as successful examples of second language learning.

However, audio-lingualism started to decline when it faced theoretical and practical criticisms. In terms of language and learning theories, the theoretical foundations of audio-lingualism were attacked as being unsound (Richards & Rodgers, 1994) on account of its viewing language learning as learning a language's syntactic patterns. Language was viewed as a system containing several structurally related elements, i.e. morphemes, words, structures and sentence types for people to encode meanings. Intensive oral drills of sentence patterns were therefore widely used as a basic technique for language teaching.

Audio-lingualism was also criticised as being impractical since learners found it impossible to survive in real communicative situations outside the classroom by using skills acquired through audio-lingualism (Richards & Rodgers, 1994). In practical terms, it was further damaged by reports that learners were not only bored by the repetitious drills that occupied so much of their time, but were not really learning any more than they ever had (Allwright & Bailey, 1991:7). This situation called for a review of audio-lingualism in second language teaching. Many socio-linguists and applied linguists in the early 1970s, like Hymes and Munby, proposed to make communicative competence the goal of second language teaching and learning. They acknowledged the interdependence of language and communication in language learning and this gave rise to a paradigmatic shift in second language education. The focus shifted from language forms to meanings. The next section describes the emergence of a groundbreaking English language teaching methodology at that time, namely, Communicative Language Teaching.

2.1.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In early 1970s, CLT movement developed partly as 'a reaction against the rigid control of the behaviourist audio-lingual methods of teaching of the 1960s and partly because such methods failed to have the desired effect of helping learners to communicate in the target foreign language' (Leaver & Willis, 2005:4). The doubts about behaviourism in second language acquisition were reinforced by Corder's (1967) research which showed that errors in second language were systematic, rather than random. The errors did not generally stem from learners' first language and his findings showed positive evidence of learners moving through specific stages of second language development. Selinker (1972) coined the term 'interlanguage' to describe these stages. He confirmed that the way in which a second language developed did not always reflect what was taught in the classroom. In other words, the understanding developed that no matter how many times the learners practised a new language structure, they would not acquire it unless they were developmentally ready for it.

This started a move away toward CLT. A second language was beginning to be recognised to be more than a set of grammar rules to be memorised, with attendant sets of vocabulary. Some British linguists, eg., Wilkins (1972), promoted the need to focus on the functional and communicative potential of language. In addition, Lightbown and Spada (1993) claimed that communicative practice is an essential element in language learning. They suggested that grammar-based approaches to language teaching do not guarantee that learners will develop a high level of linguistic competence. They argued that second language learners would be able to communicate effectively if there were ample opportunities for them to practise the target language in the classrooms.

According to the Lightbown and Spada (1993), communicative practice was a dynamic resource for creating meaning. Learning was no longer seen simply as a process of habit formation. Learners and the cognitive processes that they engaged in as

they learned were seen as important to the whole English learning process. A distinction was then drawn between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how', that is, between knowing and being able to regurgitate sets of grammatical rules, and being able to deploy this grammatical knowledge to communicate effectively (Nunan, 2004). This rethinking of second language learning led to a theoretical framework underpinning CLT being built.

CLT is rooted in the theory of communicative competence, originally proposed by Hymes in a socio-linguistics paper presented in 1972. This theoretical construct was based on the claim that knowing a language included more than the knowledge of the rules of grammar. Hymes drew attention to the importance of knowing the rules of language use. This view had a significant influence on the early development of CLT (Bikram, 1985; Breen & Candlin, 1980; Munby, 1978; Wilkins, 1976; Yalden, 1983). Since the mid-1970s, the scope of CLT has expanded to embrace a communicative approach. This approach aimed to make communicative competence the goal of language learning and to develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills (i.e. writing, listening, speaking and reading) that acknowledged the interdependence of language and communication (Littlewood, 1981). Howatt (1987) argued that there was pedagogical pressure in the 1970s, which moved language teaching towards a more functional perspective, resulted in the development of functional syllabuses. The syllabuses focused on the purposes learners may achieve through the use of a language in a particular social event. CLT, therefore, grew out of developments in functional-notional syllabus design and was aimed primarily at adult learners with highly specifiable communicative needs (Roberts, 1982).

Linguists such as Widdowson (1978) and Long (1985) argued that the second language syllabus should be designed to focus on meaning rather than forms. Halliday (1976, 1985) also proposed that the syllabus should stress teaching the functional uses

of language and genres. The benefits for learning through a CLT syllabus are that the learners know how to use language to express authentic communicative purposes and are motivated to use language to express their purposes, ideas and emotion. This is the first stage of CLT. However, since then, the concept CLT has become confusing as its application embraces both syllabus design and teaching methodology in second language pedagogy (Widdowson, 1987). This blurred concept of CLT also affects the later development of TBLT and accounts for the diverse interpretations of TBLT in its implementation.

In its second stage of development, the focus of CLT shifted from syllabus design to teaching methodology in the past two decades. Littlewood (1981) believed that CLT, by combining functional and structural views, opened up a wider perspective in language teaching. Brumfit and Johnson (1979) also encouraged students to learn strategies for communication. The emphasis was thus on the use but not the possession of the target language. They stated that language teaching needed to concentrate far more on the concept of fluency, not accuracy, in order to restore a genuine educational perspective to its aims. As Littlewood (1981) suggested, 'the primary motive for learning a language is that it provides a means of communication. A person is therefore, most likely to be drawn towards learning a second language, if he perceives a clear communicative need for it' (1984:53). There was considerable work done in the development of classroom techniques and activities to encourage a more realistic use of language in the classroom and many proposals were also made for an overall methodology of CLT at this stage (Brumfit, 1984; Johnson, 1982; Littlewood, 1981; Widdowson, 1978).

CLT emphasised the use of language, which included rich, varied and unpredictable inputs (Bikram, 1985). This enabled students to communicate in real

situations in which one had no time to prepare what to say and how to say the language in advance. In CLT classrooms, tasks were also emphasised that encouraged the negotiation of meanings between students, and between students and teachers (Ellis, 1984). Moreover, CLT emphasised successful communication, especially that which involved risk-taking. As Littlewood (1981:18) explained, 'the teacher creates a situation and sets an activity in motion, but it is the learners themselves who are responsible for conducting the interaction to its conclusion'. This means that the learners took an active role in participating in learning activities since they were the ones who carried out the learning process by bridging information gaps and taking part in unpredictable exchanges. Such emphases fulfilled the main function of language, that is, communication. Instead of a high level of accuracy being required, learners might receive little or no pressure to be accurate because the focus on form was minimised. Therefore, minimal explicit instruction of language rules was a feature in CLT classrooms (Bikram, 1985). A variety of activities were widely used in CLT classrooms. Students were more likely to engage in pair or group work so that they could use the language to communicate among themselves. Activities including information gaps were popular in CLT lessons. These activities provided opportunities for students to interact and negotiate. To sum up, the following principles were found underpinning CLT:

- CLT emphasises function over form, meaning over grammar. It does not emphasise the teaching of grammar. In CLT, grammar is regarded as just one means for achieving successful communication and not the whole content of a language.
- In CLT, learners were not only the receivers of instructions but also the contributors to the lessons by participating actively in class.

- Teachers were expected to provide ample opportunities for learners to learn a target language in a meaningful communicative context.
- There was little or no pressure to push students to perform to high levels of accuracy. Making errors was regarded as a normal learning process in CLT. A very limited amount of error correction took place.
- A variety of activities were used such as pair work, group work and role-plays, allowing students to communicate.

In Hong Kong, following the progress made in ELT worldwide, a revised English language teaching and learning syllabus for Hong Kong secondary schools, namely, *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)* (CDC, 1983) was introduced in the early 1980s. Although little was explicitly mentioned about CLT in this syllabus, belief in CLT was embedded in this syllabus. Much emphasis was given to the functional view of English as a means of communication. Language planners were aware of the fact that being able to talk about a language did not mean being able to use the language to communicate. Since CLT emphasised exposure to the target language, it was believed that having more exposure to English helped students master it better. More attention was given to the 'meaningful use' of English for purposes of communication. Unlike the previous syllabus, the 1983 syllabus focused on both spoken and written English and error correction was not stressed anymore.

The first stage of CLT focused on syllabus design to enable the language structures selected to be learned (the 'what' of language) (Widdowson, 1978). Later work done in the 1980s (Brumfit, 1984; Johnson, 1982; Littlewood, 1981) formed the second stage of CLT development, which focused on the teaching methodology (the 'how' of language). Since then, the British approach to CLT focused on functional-notional syllabus design

while the American approach focused on applying this approach to the teaching methodologies that CLT embraced. From then on, CLT became a general term to refer to all approaches focusing on meaning.

However, the view of language learning that underlies CLT has been criticised on a number of grounds. First, CLT has traditionally employed a methodological procedure consisting of 'Present-Practice-Product' (PPP) stages. Implicit in PPP is that it is possible to lead learners from controlled to automatic use of new language structures (Batstone, 1994). However, recent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and research on developmental sequences have shown that learners do not acquire a second language in this way (Block, 2002; Cook, 2001; Willis &Willis, 2001, 2007). Second, it is impracticable to design tasks that require learners to use a target language structure, as learners can always fall back on their strategic competence to circumvent it. This approach also ends up with learners focusing on form in order to complete their task (Ellis, 2003:29). This is truly ironic considering the theoretical framework underpinning CLT.

Until the late 1990s, the dichotomy of CLT application in syllabus design and teaching methodology remained a matter of controversy in the applied linguistics literature. To address this issue, language teaching theorists such as Willis (1996) and Nunan (1999) attempted to bring syllabus design ('what') and teaching methodology ('how') together and extend this methodology within the communicative approach. Since then, TBLT has replaced CLT and attracted much discussion in the literature of applied linguistics.

2.1.3 Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT is now a central concept in second language teaching in many educational institutions and ministries of education around the world, including the People Republic of China and Hong Kong (Nunan, 2004). For most English language teachers, this raises questions about the subtle relationship between CLT and TBLT. CLT is a broad, philosophical approach to the language curriculum that draws on theory and research in linguistics, anthropology, psychology and sociology (Savignon, 1993). Other approaches that could fairly claim to fall within the CLT family include content-based instruction (Brinton, 2003), text-based syllabuses (Feez, 1998), problem-based learning and immersion education (Johnston & Swain, 1997) while TBLT represents a realisation of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology (Nunan, 1999). However, Littlewood (1999) simply regarded TBLT as an extension arm of CLT.

2.2 Development of Task-based Language Teaching

The most important conceptual basis for TBLT is Experiential Learning (EL) (Nunan, 2004). This approach takes the learner's immediate personal experience as its point of departure for the language learning experience. Intellectual growth occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks. The active involvement of the learners is therefore central to this approach, and a rubric that conveniently captures the active, experiential nature of the process is 'learning by doing'. This contrasts with a 'transmission' approach to education in which the learner acquires knowledge passively from the teacher.

In the early 1990s, Kohonen (1992) began to apply EL in language teaching, arguing that,

> Experiential learning theory provides the basic philosophical view of learning as part of personal growth. The goal is to enable the learner to become increasingly self-directed and responsible for his or her own learning. This process means a gradual shift of the initiative to the learner, encouraging him or her to bring in personal contributions and experiences. Instead of the teacher setting the tasks and standards of acceptable performance, the learner is increasingly in charge of his or her own learning. (Kohonen, 1992:37)

In many respects, Kohonen's model can be seen as a theoretical blueprint for TBLT as he highlighted the fit between EL and the concepts of learner-centredness and autonomy (Nunan, 2004). In TBLT, tasks help learners to become aware of, reflect on and evaluate their own learning style. This meant that learners were more directed in their learning and it was thought that they would eventually reach an ideal level of language learning autonomy (Benson, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Lamb, 2000).

However, TBLT means different things to different people, and how TBLT could be implemented in second language classrooms is still open to discussion among applied linguists. Nunan's (1989) framework of TBLT suggested rehearsing tasks from the real world and transforming them into pedagogical tasks that learners could perform in the classroom, given them enabling skills sufficient to cope with the demands of the tasks. Nunan considered TBLT a pedagogy which reveals to learners to systematic interrelationships between form, meaning and use. This framework is more applicable to adult learners as they may have higher cognitive skills to select and manipulate language structures for the accomplishment of tasks whereas for younger students the tasks set in classrooms may be too demanding. It is also difficult to establish the link between the pedagogical and the real-world tasks within school contexts.

Littlewood (1993) considered TBLT as comprising two dimensions. The first dimension was associated with learners' active involvement in purposeful work, while the second dimension emphasised foreign language learning and teaching. Teachers had to encourage learners to participate as much as possible in all activities and help learners to develop competent knowledge in foreign language learning. The difference between Littlewood's interpretations of CLT and TBLT is minimal except for the addition of the concept of 'learner-centredness'.

Some applied linguists have stressed the place of language structures as an essential pre-requisite in TBLT. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) argued that particular language structures were not something desirable, but necessary in task completion. Ellis (1994) also suggested that specific structures should be seeded into particular tasks and believed that this would be difficult to achieve across a range of structures in TBLT. This aroused the interests of applied linguists to further improve the model of TBLT, especially in the direction of developing a model that could eventually accommodate the focuses of both meaning and form in language learning.

Willis (1996) offered a framework that aimed to marry 'form' and 'meaning' through careful task design. Willis's approach to TBLT was influential to the current perception of task-based instruction in many practical classroom situations. The central feature of Willis's approach was that language form emerged as relevant to the meanings that were being attempted because of the task. Hence, meaning triggered form (Skehan, 1998). Willis's framework for TBLT is outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Willis's (1996:26) model for task-based instruction

Stages	Lesson Organisation
Pre-Task	Introduction to topic and task Provide exposure to real language Use of texts and activities upon those texts
Task Cycle	Task Planning, draft and rehearse Teacher helps with language emphasis on clarity, organisation, accuracy Report
Language Focus	Analysis Practice

Willis's framework offered a more practical orientation to the implementation of TBLT as it was designed in a task cycle. This coincided with the typical PPP methodology of the daily classroom teaching familiar to most Hong Kong teachers. Willis's framework also fits with the cognitive approach supported by Skehan (1998). Skehan (1998:129) offered five principles for implementing task-based methodologies in second language curriculum:

1. Choose a range of target structures;
2. Choose tasks which meet the utility criterion;
3. Sequence tasks to achieve balanced goal development;
4. Maximise chances of use of structures through attentional manipulation;
5. Use cycle of accountability.

These principles complemented Willis's model and organised the language syllabus systematically, implemented through communicative methods. There are a number of frameworks to be found in the modern TBLT literature. In this thesis, Willis's framework is used to examine TBLT in Hong Kong. It does not only provide a clear

phase-by-phase analysis of classroom instruction, but also allows TBLT to be implemented at different cognitive levels. Based on the above interpretations, TBLT can be said to be characterised by the following features:

- A meaningful communicative purpose is clearly stated;
- There is a resemblance between the task and everyday communication;
- Focus is on the meaning rather than linguistic aspects (grammar, vocabulary, function and pronunciation);
- A variety of activities are used for learners to interact and solve problems;
- There is unpredictability in the outputs.

These TBLT features are extremely important for this study as they provide a conceptual framework for developing the research methods used in the data collection. They also serve as an essential reference for analysing the data. Nevertheless, some of these features are also illustrated in CLT (Section 2.1.2) such as the focus on meaning, learners' active participation in learning and the provision of a meaningful communicative purpose in learning. It explains why many second language teachers regard TBLT as simply a new 'label' for CLT. The particular features of TBLT, such as the resemblance between task and everyday communication and an unpredictability of outputs, are easily overlooked in practice.

2.3 Problems with Task-based Language Teaching

As regards theory, it is natural to see problems occurring when a theory is put into practice in different contexts over time. TBLT is no exception. Some of the problems with TBLT that have been raised in the literature are outlined below:

2.3.1 Lesson Planning

Klapper (2003:3) argued that TBLT rejected the assumption on which mainstream CLT was based, in particular its classic lesson structure of Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP). Littlewood's (1981) transition of pre-communicative (structural or quasi-communicative activities) to communicative (functional and social interactions) used to fit well into this classic lesson structure. In PPP, the teacher draws learners' attention to a specific form or structure (Presentation); then the teacher's control gradually eases and learners are free to exchange the target language forms with stimuli (Practice), and finally learners engage in open practice, free of the teacher's control, with their focus now on meaning. Learners have to use the target language to complete the tasks in the form of desirable outcomes (Production). Cook (2001:224) acknowledged this as 'the mainstream EFL style and recommended PPP's apparent agreement with general learning theories related to the operationalisation and automatisation of learnt matters'. Hence it made the teacher's role clear and allowed simple lesson planning with distinct phases.

However, according to TBLT, learners are free to manipulate any language structures to accomplish the tasks that they are assigned to complete. Only later will they master the structures through the tasks they have carried out. In other words, in TBLT, Production (Outcomes) comes before Presentation (Specific Form or Structure). This is contrary to the classic PPP model and constitutes a significant change in the understandings of the traditional teaching paradigm held by experienced English language teachers. Moreover, without pre-planned lesson objectives and the aim of mastering specific target structures, this causes great difficulty for teachers, especially the beginning teachers, whom require a clear and explicit step-by-step teaching plan to follow in their lessons.

2.3.2 Goals of Language Instruction

Skehan (1998) suggested that the three key goals of language instructions are accuracy, complexity and fluency. To Skehan, no learners could attend to these three goals simultaneously and emphasising one would definitely be at the expense of the other two. For example, in many CLT lessons, fluency is usually achieved at the expense of accuracy and complexity. In TBLT, what learners have to achieve are just the desirable task outcomes, with effective completion of tasks accorded priority. Learners are only required to use their existing linguistic resources to complete the tasks, and only later are they required to pay attention to language forms. Thus accuracy might be at the expense of fluency and complexity. As these three key learning goals are not all reflected in task-based instructions, it would be unrealistic to expect learners to achieve an evenly distributed focus on the three key learning goals through TBLT.

2.3.3 Task Appropriacy

Long and Crookes (1992) commented that it was impossible for anyone to verify the appropriateness of particular pedagogic tasks for a given group of learners. All tasks were in fact designed and prepared in advance by teachers simply based on their understanding of what is appropriate and relevant for the learners in their classes. This raises the issue that different teachers might prescribe very different pedagogic tasks for learners and hence very different learning outcomes might result due to the differences between different teachers' understandings.

Moreover, grading the difficulty of a task and sequencing tasks are also discretionary processes left partly to the real-time judgments by the teachers themselves. Teachers find assessing task difficulties and task sequencing problematic. There is little

empirical support for the various parameters proposed for task classification and difficulty, nor has much effort been made to define some of them in operational terms. Designing tasks for language classrooms is perhaps the most difficult task for many language teachers.

2.3.4 Task Finiteness

One can hardly find a TBLT lesson which consists of only one single task. In each lesson, learners are usually required to accomplish a major task which may be composed of several sub-tasks. Teachers have to sequence the tasks well so that they can eventually build up the outcome to be expected from the major task. However, task is a problematic concept as its finiteness is so blurred that we can hardly distinguish where one ends and when the next one begins. They do not exist in a linear relationship to each other along which learners can clearly know the progress of their task completion. Usually learners have to do a few tasks at a time and some tasks have to be extended for the sake of the major task completion. For example, in a typical TBLT lesson, a learner might listen to an audio-recording of a staff meeting and read a number of written documents before he or she could write a memorandum to inform all colleagues about the renovation work of their staff common room. In this example, the learner could never complete any of the tasks in priority as he or she probably had to manage the listening, reading and writing tasks simultaneously until he or she could produce the memorandum as the final product of the major task.

2.3.5 Task Planning

TBLT is relatively structured, in the sense of being pre-planned and guided by teachers. Teachers usually exercise their own professional judgement to arbitrarily design and

sequence tasks according to their personal perceptions of task difficulty. Teachers would definitely plan the lessons in an efficient manner for teaching and learning. Learners thus have little freedom to negotiate the tasks that they are genuinely interested in and learning becomes a receptive process at its planning stage. As a result, it may cause tension between learning efficiency and autonomy. This remains a weakness in the TBLT framework, unexplained by any TBLT theorists.

2.3.6 Cultural Context

Many innovative ideas in teaching have gone astray because the cultural context of the testing ground was neglected. The Bangalore Project in India led by a British Council Officer, N. S. Phrabu, in the early 1980s is a typical example to illustrate how a commendable teaching idea might be doomed if it is applied arbitrarily elsewhere. The Bangalore Project was an attempt to explore the belief that the development of second language competence required not so much systematised language input but that this could be replaced by the well arranged conditions under which learners cope with communication provided in a procedural syllabus. Later, the Bangalore Project was evaluated as having been unsuccessful (Pennycook, 1994). Pennycook (1994:152) further commented that the Project was due to the British Council's interest in gaining acclaim for its promotion of CLT due to its powerful economic and ideological underpinnings. To Pennycook, teaching practices needed to be seen as cultural practices so the promotion of particular teaching approaches was closely linked both to the promotion of English and of particular forms of culture and knowledge.

Although English is recognised as a very important language for work and study, Hong Kong English language teachers, like the South Indian English teachers in the Bangalore Project, have never come to terms with demands for a change in English

language teaching pedagogy. In fact, TBLT is a reform item of the recent Hong Kong curriculum reform. Nevertheless, such reform is the result of a top-down policy instruction from the education authority of the Hong Kong Government to all English teachers. The reform may result in a teaching approach not readily assimilable by typical teachers, the conclusion reached by Alderson and Beretta (1992) regarding the Bangalore Project. I see this conclusion is also applicable to Hong Kong English language teachers.

2.4 Definition of Task

As the conceptualisation of 'task' is central to TBLT, the evolving definitions of task in the literature are discussed below so that an unambiguous definition of task can be reached. This is intended to help explain the discrepancies between the kinds of pedagogy promoted in the literature and those in official curriculum documents to be used in practice. This will also help to establish a clear definition of TBLT so that this research can adequately analyse the teachers' beliefs about TBLT and what is actually going on in classroom practice. This section looks at the various definitions of task in English language teaching and discusses how its conceptualisation leads to different interpretations of TBLT.

Undoubtedly, the concept of task is crucial to TBLT since tasks are meant to be the 'base' of the whole framework. Language pedagogues have discussed language tasks extensively in the last two decades but the notion of task still means different things to different people. Tasks are, in fact, variously defined. Long (1985), for example, suggested that 'tasks are the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at parties, and in-between'. This was a non-pedagogical definition and was quite different from Nunan (1989:10) who argued that 'task is a piece of classroom work

which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form'. Nunan focused on the pedagogical task to be accomplished within the classroom. Until recently, Williams and Burden (1997:168) advocated that a task was 'any activity that learners engage in to further the process of learning a language'. Then, what exactly is a task? What is the role of a task in second language learning and teaching? How can language learning take place as an outcome of performing a task? How does a task differ from an exercise or an activity in the language lessons?

Crookes (1986:1) warned early that in 'neither research nor language pedagogy is there a complete agreement as to what constitutes a task, making its definition problematic'. It is crucial to examine the evolving definitions of tasks and discuss important distinctions between them. Doyle (1983:161) summarised the concept of tasks by focusing attention on three aspects: 'the products students are to formulate; the operations that are to be used to generate the product; and the "givens" or resources available to students while they are generating a product'. Long (1985:89) defined a task as 'a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others freely or for some rewards' and a task was meant 'the hundred and one things people did in everyday life, at work, at play and in between'. However, to Breen (1987:23), a task was 'any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedures and a range of outcomes for those who undertook the task'. Tasks were therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans which had the overall purpose of facilitating language learning, from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving, simulations or decision making.

Tasks could also be defined as language use activities making certain cognitive demands on learners (Bygate *et al.*, 2001; Littlewood, 1993; Skehan, 1998). Candlin (1987) saw a task as a sequential and problem-solving social activity, which involved the application of existing knowledge to the attainment of goals. Prabhu (1987:24) restricted a task to an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some thought process and allowed teachers to control and regulate that process. Nunan (1989:10) regarded a task as a real-world activity or a contrived, pedagogical activity. A pedagogical task could be defined as a piece of classroom work that involved learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention was focused on mobilising their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention was to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have the sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and end. Examples of classroom tasks included: listening to a weather forecast and deciding what to wear; responding to a party invitation; completing a banking application; and describing the photo of a family.

Willis (1996:23) defined that tasks were always activities where learners used the target language for a communicative purpose, i.e. they had a goal, in order to achieve an outcome. All tasks had a specified objective that had to be achieved, i.e. they were goal-oriented, often in a given time. The emphasis was on understanding and conveying meanings in order to complete the task successfully. Tasks provided opportunities for free and meaningful use of the target language. Later, Willis and Willis (2001) further suggested that task should be restricted to communicative tasks and exclude meta-communicative tasks, as otherwise a task would be so all-embracing that it would cover almost anything that might happen in a classroom. In the task, learners were not

aiming to reproduce a series of language forms only. The aim of a task was for learners to create a system of meanings, which they could operate rapidly and efficiently in real-time. In their most recent work, Willis and Willis (2007:8) also reminded teachers that they should not overlook the importance of forms in task-based teaching, arguing that a variety of meaningful tasks comprising new vocabulary items and grammar structures should be done in the skills lessons. They divided tasks into the following categories based on a classification of cognitive processes:

1. Listing
2. Ordering and sorting
3. Matching
4. Comparing
5. Problem solving
6. Sharing personal experiences
7. Carrying out projects and creative tasks

The above list offers a helpful guide to teachers for planning a variety of language learning tasks aimed at different levels of students.

Bygate *et al.* (2001:11) pointed out that 'a task is an activity which requires learners to use language with the emphasis on meaning and to attain an objective'. Learners could learn the language through such an activity. Ellis (2003:7) took a more comprehensive view of the concept of task. He stressed that 'tasks do involve cognitive processes such as selecting, reasoning, classifying, sequencing information and transforming information from one form of representation to another'.

Among the definitions of tasks, there seems to be a general agreement that tasks are:

- associated with specific situations;
- goal-oriented;
- actively participated in by the learners.

As seen from the very diverse definitions mentioned above, it seems impossible to identify a task in the language teaching and learning process following a particular definition. Also, it is impractical to mix the various concepts of tasks above as they were generated from different perspectives. For example, Long (1985) considered tasks as the 'hundred and one things people did in the real-world' whereas Nunan (1989) focused on the pedagogical tasks in the classrooms. Therefore, I begin to explore the features commonly found in tasks with a view to redefining the construct of task to suit the current research.

2.4.1 Features of Tasks

The following five aspects of tasks, interpreted on the basis of recent literature (for example, Bygate *et al.*, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1998; Willis & Willis, 2007) are evaluated as to whether the teaching and learning activities are tasks: given inputs, linguistic demands, cognitive demands, output demands, and sequencing.

Given inputs

Inputs should be graded to suit learners of different competences. There should be a wide range of materials for learning, including not only text-based materials (*e.g.*

textbooks) but also authentic materials (*e.g.* newspapers and brochures) and task-based materials (*e.g.* role cards for problem-solving activities).

Linguistic demands

This aspect makes demands on knowledge of language itself, for example, vocabulary, grammar knowledge, accuracy and fluency. Usually, the language demands for advanced learners are higher than those for beginners; for example, a more advanced learner may need to manipulate a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structures in order to write a job application letter (a writing task) or attend an interview (a speaking task), while a beginner may only be required to fill in an application form for a library ticket (a writing task) or complete a questionnaire (a speaking and listening task).

Cognitive demands

The more cognitive work is required in a task, the more difficult the task is (Skehan, 1998). For example, a substitution task is easier than data analysis. Therefore, a task involving critical thinking, problem-solving or conflict resolution is more difficult for learners. More cognitive work is demanded of advanced learners as they have greater competence in the target language and a better understanding of the world.

Output demands

Outputs can be in written or spoken form and vary in accordance with the cognitive and linguistic demands made by the task.

Sequencing

Building up learners' knowledge or language skills needs a series of linked tasks. The more tasks involved to produce an output, the more difficult the output is. Tasks are scaled with regards to levels of difficulty. The scale should be based on the level of learner and the purpose of the task. For example, a series of pre-tasks or structured tasks should be completed before asking beginners to perform a communicative task. This is because they need more inputs and practice as their competence in the target language is not well developed at that stage. Advanced learners, on the other hand, may start with easier tasks and proceed to more demanding tasks.

2.4.2 Roles of Tasks

Task is a central construct of TBLT and how teachers conceive of tasks in the teaching process is an independent variable affecting the outcome of TBLT. This section illustrates the roles of tasks in TBLT from various perspectives.

Task as a continuum

The present syllabus for secondary schools in Hong Kong namely, *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)* (CDC, 1999a) is clearly based on the practice of TBLT, distinguishing exercises and tasks. In the Interim Report of the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) Evaluation Project (Morris *et al.*, 1996), classroom activities were further categorised into Exercises, Exercise-Tasks and Tasks.

Exercises	Exercise-Tasks	Tasks
Low degree of communicative purpose and contextualisation	Contextualised practice of discrete items	High degree of communicative purpose and contextualisation
Focus on discrete items and/or skills	⟷	Purposefulness and conceptualisation

Figure 1: Exercises, Exercise-Tasks and Tasks as a continuum (Morris *et al.*, 1996)

These three categories lie on a continuum in which exercises focus on discrete items and/or skills that are required for more holistic tasks; exercise-tasks serve as more contextualised practice of discrete items whereas tasks are purposeful and contextualised. The concept of a continuum is extremely important because it affects the design of both pedagogy and textbook. In order to make the learners notice the available inputs to carry out the required tasks, discrete items and skills should be practised before moving to holistic tasks. However, the balance between exercises and tasks in textbooks should be varied according to the levels of learners. Since beginners have a lower level of competence in the target language, more exercises should be offered them to focus on discrete language items and skills.

In TBLT, both linguistic and cognitive developments are considered in the process stage. Learners develop their linguistic competence in the target language by doing tasks. They also build up their cognitive development by solving problems. Moreover, tasks usually vary in scale to achieve different purposes, for example, discussing with partners things that can be recycled before studying a comprehension passage about recycling. In addition to the discrete language items, teachers often design speaking tasks to arouse the interests of learners and activate their previous knowledge of the task topic so that they can prepare for more demanding tasks coming later.

Task as product

Doyle (1983) summarised the anatomy of academic tasks composing of three elements: the *products* that students were to formulate; the *resources* that are available to students while fulfilling the tasks; and the *operations* that the students are expected to perform to turn resources into the assigned products. In language teaching, the resources are important influences on the quality of the products as they provide essential context for student work in classrooms. In other words, tasks cue students to what they should pay attention to, rehearse, or retrieve, in successfully creating academic products.

Besides being a product, a task is also expected to produce outcomes in the learning process. Willis and Willis (2001:173) described the task-based lesson as a place where 'the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome'. Ellis (2003:16) also defined a pedagogical task as 'a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed'.

Tasks with objectives

The element of objectives was considered by Breen (1987:23), Crookes (1986:1) and Long (1985:89) when defining tasks. They considered that a task was an activity that had a particular objective to facilitate the achieving of communicative competence in language learning. Hence, all tasks were said to have specified objectives that must be achieved. Usually, in their view the emphasis was on understanding, conveying and negotiating meanings in order to complete tasks successfully.

Pedagogical and real-world tasks

Nunan (1989) drew a distinction between real-world or target tasks and pedagogical tasks. Pedagogical tasks link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom. In other words, real-world tasks were considered activities related to the communication of meaning outside the classroom. Nunan also pointed out that some classroom activities were not rehearsals of daily life activities but facilitated the development of a learner's general proficiency. These activities were thus pedagogical tasks.

Task in cognitive and personality domains

Some linguists, such as Fried-Booth (1986), Hutchinson (1991) and Ribe and Vidal (1993), saw tasks from another perspective. They advocated the integration of language skills with learners' cognitive skills and personality in managing tasks.

According to Ribe and Vidal (1993), tasks could be divided into three generations. First-generation tasks developed learners' communication ability. These formed the foundation of cognitive development and global personality abilities at an advanced level, which were the second- and third-generation tasks. When learners had experience in specific situations of language, they would be ready to learn general cognitive skills in handling and organising information at the stage of second generation. The contributions of the three generations of tasks are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Three generations of task (Ribe &Vidal, 1993:4)

First-generation task	Second-generation task	Third-generation task
Communicative development	Communicative development	Communicative development
	Cognitive development	Cognitive development
		Global personality development

The three generations of tasks were not only concerned with aspects of communication, but also with the cognitive and personality development of learners. In this model, 'project work' was mentioned as a third-generation task. Project work thus became a new dimension of tasks by incorporating authenticity, learner autonomy and motivation in language teaching. All in all, content and its presentation were totally determined by learners themselves and learners retained a high degree of autonomy in their language learning.

Having examined the literature regarding half a century of language teaching, the development of TBLT and the definitions of tasks, I would argue that TBLT is still a problematic issue as there is no consensus shared by applied linguists as well as second language teachers. Therefore it is suggested that TBLT remains an important topic of research in applied linguistics.

The next chapter describes the details of English language teaching context in Hong Kong. It also looks at how TBLT was implemented and how the definition of tasks was perceived and redefined in this specific context.

Chapter 3: Hong Kong Context

The aim of this chapter is to describe the present English language curriculum policy and curriculum development in the Hong Kong education system. I will first outline the present context of English language teaching in Hong Kong, followed by a discussion on the development of the Medium of Instruction Policy and of the English Language Curriculum Policy. Also I attempt to re-define the concept of task in the present Hong Kong language and education context and explore how TBLT is being implemented in this particular context.

3.1 Context of English Language Teaching in Hong Kong

Since the policy address by the first Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government in 1997, all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong have had to adopt the 'Bi-literate and Tri-lingual' language policy. This policy means that all students are expected to learn to read and write in English and Chinese (bi-literate), and to listen and speak in English, Cantonese and Putonghua (tri-lingual). ('*Cantonese*' is a regional spoken dialect in southern China while '*Putonghua*' is the only official spoken form of Chinese. '*Putonghua*' is also known as '*Mandarin*' elsewhere). Until now, this policy has been mentioned in all official policy addresses by the subsequent Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR Government and in all education forums by the top education officials from the Hong Kong SAR Government. In the Education Commission's (EC) *Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation* (EC, 2005), this language policy is envisaged as one of the aims of school education in Hong Kong. According to a recent curriculum reform document regarding the lesson time for English language education, the *New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary*

Education and Higher Education: Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong (EMB, 2005), all schools are to set English language as their core curriculum subject and devote no less than 20% of their total lesson time to English language education. English language education is an issue of great importance to the education system in Hong Kong.

Compared with education systems in Western countries, the Hong Kong education system offers relatively fewer curriculum choices to students. All primary school students follow a rigid six-year primary curriculum. Following that are five years of secondary schooling and another two years of sixth form studies, which are to prepare students for the university entrance examination. In their thirteen years of primary and secondary school education, students are required to follow the school curriculum, which is focused on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values associated with a range of academic disciplines. Students' progress and achievements in this system are mainly measured by schools' internal examinations and public examinations. Class size at primary and secondary school levels is around 40, with up to 45 in some popular schools. The teaching methodology is mostly didactic. Students lack the opportunities of inquiry, interaction and group work. Even though there is an increasing demand to involve students more actively in their learning processes, *e.g.* project work, the classes are predominantly teacher-centred, where teachers spend most of their time lecturing and students occupy themselves with passive listening, recording knowledge presented or simply day-dreaming (Morris, 1996).

English has played an unusual role in Hong Kong society. Although English is an official language in Hong Kong, students hardly have opportunities to learn English outside the school environment. Cantonese, a dialect spoken in the southern region of China, is the native language of the vast majority of Hong Kong population and any

people can survive easily in Hong Kong with only the command of Chinese language. Nevertheless, English is very important in the business world and good English competence is a passport to higher education, a brighter career and better life. Most Hong Kong people still see the value of English and recognise a need for studying it. English language education policy is always a popular topic for education research in Hong Kong. The following sections explore the policies regarding medium of instruction and English curriculum for Hong Kong schools as they directly affect the implementation of TBLT in English language classrooms.

3.1.1 Medium of Instruction Policy

English has been the official language in Hong Kong since 1842 when Hong Kong became a British colony after the signing of the 'Treaty of Nanjing'. At that time, English was used exclusively by government officials and legal professionals working under the English common law system. Although Chinese, mainly Cantonese, was widely used by people of all classes in Hong Kong, English enjoyed superior status in society and was a symbol of power. Schooling was rare at this early stage in Hong Kong's history and most people made their living from fishing or agriculture. English enjoyed its superior status as the only official language in the colonial government administration until 1974, when Chinese was introduced as another official language in Hong Kong. Up until now, both have remained the two official languages in Hong Kong.

By the beginning of the 20th century, a number of schools had been built in Hong Kong by overseas missionaries. More and more Hong Kong schools started to adopt English medium education in the 1960s, at a time when Hong Kong was emerging as a major trading port in the word. With the exception of Chinese language and Chinese

History, all subjects on the school curriculum were taught entirely in English. Although more and more public schools were built in Hong Kong, school education during this period was primarily for the children of the elite and the richer classes. Many expatriate teachers, especially from missionaries, were recruited to teach English in these schools.

In 1978, free and compulsory education of nine years' duration was introduced for all Hong Kong children under the age of fifteen and school places increased rapidly. In the following two decades (1978–1998), schools could choose their own medium of instruction freely. During this period, over 90 % of the secondary schools claimed to be English Medium-of-Instruction (EMI) schools. Language education policy was in chaos as there was no quality assurance on language policy of the EMI schools. Despite claiming to be EMI schools, in practice classroom instruction was mostly delivered in Cantonese or a mixed code of Cantonese and English while formal elements such as textbooks and examinations were in English.

In September 1998, the Government of Hong Kong amended the Education Ordinance and requested all secondary schools to adopt Chinese as medium-of-instruction (CMI) for teaching all subjects other than English. Under this policy, schools could apply for an EMI status on condition that their students proved capable of learning effectively through English in all subjects, under the criteria set by the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) administered by the government. In the school year 2006 to 2007, only 112 out of the territory's 408 secondary schools were approved as EMI schools. The government has a clear stance that mother-tongue teaching did not necessarily lead to a decline in English proficiency. The government has since carried out a series of additional support measures for CMI schools. Each CMI school can employ two native English-speaking teachers and an additional local teacher to support English language teaching. A generous recurrent

English subject grant is provided to every CMI school so as to maintain a high quality of English language teaching and an English-rich learning environment. Starting from 2007, all CMI secondary schools are eligible for a brand new English Enhancement Grant for up to HK $3,000,000 spent over six years to enhance their English language learning and teaching. To ensure the quality of English language teaching in Hong Kong schools, all English teachers were required by the Code of Aid (Education Ordinance) to meet the Language Proficiency Requirement set by the education authority. From 2008, all teachers in EMI schools are required to meet a set of English proficiency benchmarks so as to guarantee effective EMI teaching. Although the majority of Hong Kong students are still being taught using CMI, the above administrative measures indicate that English is of the utmost importance in Hong Kong school education.

Under the current medium-of-instruction policy for secondary schools, students in CMI schools naturally have less exposure to English than the students in EMI schools. For this reason TBLT is facing a less advantageous condition in CMI schools. Undoubtedly, teachers in EMI schools are also in a better position to adopt TBLT as their students will have more opportunities to manipulate English language lexical resources and grammatical structures to accomplish tasks across various subjects. In conclusion, TBLT in CMI schools poses a great challenge to English teachers in Hong Kong and for this reason the current study focuses on investigating how TBLT was implemented in a particular CMI school context.

3.1.2 English Language Curriculum Policy

Since 1974, Chinese and English have been the two official languages in Hong Kong. In theory, they enjoy equal status and both are core subjects in the school curriculum. All schools teach the two languages to students everyday. Most schools reserve more time

for English language teaching than for Chinese as it is a second language for the majority of the students. As recommended in the 1975 English Language syllabus for Hong Kong schools (CDC, 1975), English lessons were conducted in the then ruling paradigm of audio-lingualism. Learning English was viewed as learning its forms, structural features and sentence patterns only. It was believed that learning happened through the formation of good language habits, and so mechanical drills, repetition and other habit-forming practices were used to help students learn English. Moreover, grammatical correctness was emphasised and errors were considered undesirable in any form of students' work.

With the progress made in English Language Teaching (ELT) worldwide, the next revised syllabus was released in 1983. Although little was explicitly said about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a belief in CLT was embedded in this syllabus. Much emphasis was given to the functional view of English as a means of communication. Language planners were aware of the fact that being able to talk about a language did not mean being able to use the language to communicate properly. Since CLT emphasised exposure to the target language, it was believed that having more exposure to English helped students master it better. More attention was given to the 'meaningful use' of English for the purpose of communication. Unlike in the previous syllabus, both spoken and written English were focused on and error correction was not stressed in the 1983 syllabus.

The latest revised syllabus for secondary schools in Hong Kong was released in 1999. There is no doubt that this syllabus still follows a communicative approach but the role of CLT has been replaced by TBLT, which was made English language teaching policy in the Hong Kong school curriculum. TBLT is generally regarded as an ideal second language teaching approach in the 21stcentury.

> The goal of language teaching is to provide every learner with the opportunity to develop the ability to carry out successfully certain tasks and communicative transactions in English. The ultimate aim of language learning is to use language as a means of communication. (CDC, 1999a:150)

In 2002, the Hong Kong SAR Government redesigned the whole school curriculum framework and all subjects taken in schools were divided into eight major Key Learning Areas (KLA). English Language Education is an independent KLA and occupies the heaviest weighting in the school curriculum. Each KLA is published with an individual curriculum guide of a specific area and such a curriculum document aims to 'present curriculum frameworks which specify the KLA's curriculum aims, learning targets and objectives, and provide suggestions regarding curriculum planning, learning and teaching strategies, assessment and resources' (CDC, 2002b:Preamble).

Since then, all schools in Hong Kong have been encouraged to adopt the recommendations in these KLA curriculum guides and to achieve the learning goals of the school curriculum and aims of education, taking into consideration their own contexts, needs and strengths. In the *English Language Education KLA Curriculum Guide* (CDC, 2002b), TBLT governs the organisation of the existing English language curriculum and is central to English language education in Hong Kong.

3.2 Re-defining Task

A number of definitions of task have been examined in Chapter 2. They vary somewhat and emphasise the fact that tasks involve communicative language use in which the focus is placed on meanings rather than forms. Nevertheless, to suggest that it is not possible to arrive at an exact definition of task is not to suggest that no attempt should be made to define a task at all. As Bygate *et al.* (2001) argued, the way we define a task

will depend to a certain extent on the purposes to which tasks are used. Based on the contextual factors in Hong Kong, I now re-define task to suit the need of my present research in the context of Hong Kong, as shown in Figure 2:

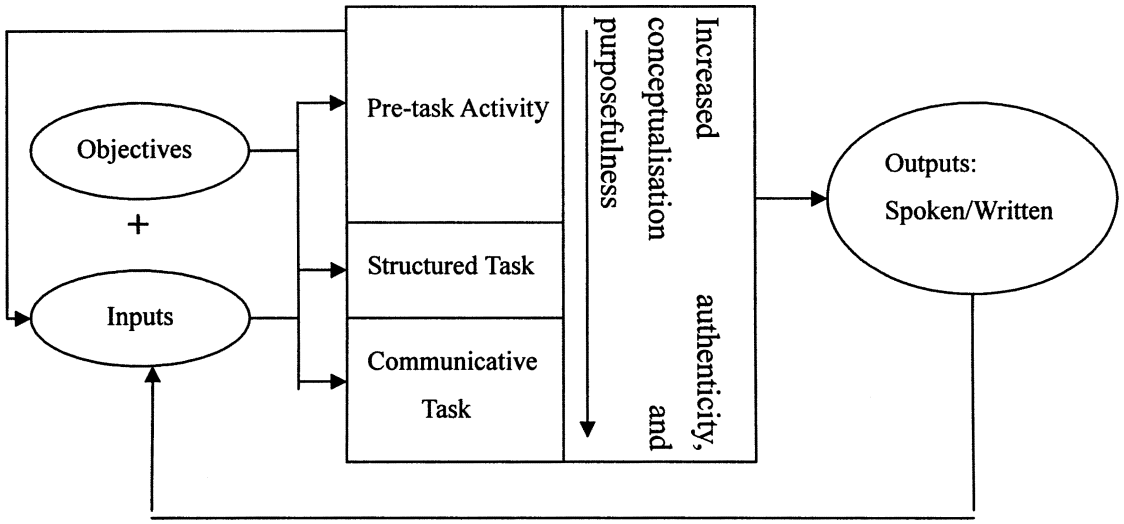

Figure 2: Definition of 'task'

Task is believed to replicate as closely as possible authentic communication. It is an activity with clearly stated objectives. Before carrying out the task, there should be inputs for the learners. After finishing the task, an output is produced, either in spoken or written form. The output should be measurable and correspond to the objectives.

The concept of task may also be seen as representing a progression. The first task, which is in fact a pre-task activity, is a very teacher-controlled activity. It helps check learners' schemas or understanding of a grammar items, for example, reading comprehension exercises and grammar exercises. The pre-task activity should not involve any teaching of new information. Instead pre-task activity should focus on what the language items mean or how they are formed. The other two activities are structured task and communicative task, with authenticity, conceptualisation and purposefulness of the task increasing towards the accomplishment of the communicative task.

Usually, in a structured task, the main focus is on meaning rather than purely the linguistic items. Although the purpose of the structured task can be meaningful and interaction of learners is involved, there is little unpredictability in the outputs. Communicative tasks include problem-solving activities, information-gap activities, experience-sharing activities, role-plays and project works. In a TBLT classroom, I believe learners have to practise language structure in a context or use pre-learnt structures to communicate meaning in a situation. They should go through the task sequence before they could actually accomplish this task.

Although there are also five features of task suggested in the literature (see Section 2.4.1), namely given inputs, linguistic demands, cognitive demands, output demands and sequencing, they are too theoretical in nature and hard to apply in a real context. Therefore, I redefine task with features that are particular to the Hong Kong school context as follows:

- A task has a particular objective to facilitate language learning.
- A task requires learners to produce an outcome, which may either be concrete (*e.g.* a report) or intangible (*e.g.* a solution to a problem).
- A task is designed in sequence, that is, it can be mainly divided into pre-task (teaching the relevant language structure) and the task itself.
- A task helps learners to become competent in purposeful communication in real situations.
- Varieties of activities are used, such as pair work, group work and role-plays, for learners to interact and solve problems.

3.3 Task-based Language Teaching in Hong Kong

As stated in Chapter 2, with the progress made in ELT worldwide, the belief that CLT should be adopted was embedded in the 1983 English language syllabus for Hong Kong schools. In this syllabus, more emphasis was given to the functional view of English as a means of communication. Language planners were aware of the fact that being able to talk about a language did not mean being able to use the language to communicate properly. Since CLT emphasised exposure to the target language, it was believed that having more exposure to English helped students master it better. More attention was given to the 'meaningful use' of English for the purposes of communication.

TBLT is happening worldwide and Hong Kong is no exception. A large-scale investigation was carried out into the use of the task-based approach to foreign language teaching in European countries, led by Ribe (1997), exploring both theoretical and practical aspects during the period 1992-1995. In 1999, the Education Department of Hong Kong launched the 'Target Oriented Curriculum', which was also described as a curriculum underwritten by a task-based approach and whose philosophy was broadly similar (Leaver & Willis, 2005:4).

The latest revised English language syllabus for secondary schools in Hong Kong was released in 1999 and the importance of the TBLT was reinstated as an ideal second language teaching approach for the next century:

> the goal of language teaching is to provide every learner with the opportunity to develop the ability to carry out successfully certain tasks and communicative transactions in English. The ultimate aim of language learning is to use language as a means of communication. (CDC, 1999a:150)

TBLT has clearly replaced CLT in Hong Kong. It is also the new orthodoxy with all major English language textbook publishers in Hong Kong, *e.g.* Pearson-Longman,

Oxford, Aristo and Macmillan. They all claim explicitly that their state-of-the-art series of English textbooks adopt a 'task-based' approach. Similarly, the official English curriculum document of the Hong Kong SAR Government also shows that in the 21st century ELT is to be based on TBLT:

> The task-based approach [upon which the curriculum is built] aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in the process of completing a task. The use of tasks will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. ... All in all, the role of task-based learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. (CDC, 1999a:41)

The more recent curriculum document about English language teaching in Hong Kong also explains clearly the status of TBLT in the Hong Kong curriculum:

> Schools are encouraged to enrich English Language learning and teaching through: incorporating the four key tasks – moral and civic education, project learning, reading to learn, and IT for interactive learning; life-wide learning; task-based learning and teaching; catering for learner diversity; and greater use of formative assessment as well as quality and timely feedback to improve students' learning.(CDC, 2002b:Preamble)

Moreover, the Hong Kong SAR Government has devoted many resources and much effort to promote TBLT, for example, meeting with textbook publishers, running refresher training courses and workshops, implementing re-training programmes and organising TBLT seminars for serving English teachers. For the benefit of the students, teachers are encouraged to make students use English to do tasks. Recently, the government has also been promoting project work for students. Students can be actively engaged in their own learning and this has created an ideal environment for Hong Kong English teachers to implement TBLT.

TBLT seems to be a promising approach in the Hong Kong context and there is no doubt that all English language teachers are looking to this official language teaching policy for their professional practice and guidance. However, putting policy into practice is a transformative process whose difficulties are underestimated by ELT theorists. There are many factors that may distort such a transformation, the more salient of which are:

1. Teachers' attitudes;
2. Clarity of curriculum documents;
3. Teacher training;
4. Communication and support during the implementation;
5. Compatibility of curriculum with the contingencies of the classroom and wider educational context.

(Karavas in Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998:31)

Nunan (2004) also claimed recently that it was not possible that the rhetoric of language teaching theory could match the reality. In an earlier Australian study, Nunan (1987) had reported a large gap between rhetoric and reality in relation to CLT, and

argued that schools that claimed to be teaching according to the principles of CLT were doing nothing of the sort. Nunan suspected the same situation happened in the realisation of TBLT in the classrooms. Numerous interpretations and orientations can be expected for any innovative teaching ideas, and TBLT is surely no exception. The fact that multiple perspectives and applications have developed is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it is probably a good thing in that the concept has the power to speak to different people in different ways and thus TBLT still remains a quest in the professional practice of most English language teachers in Hong Kong.

The present version of the English Language Syllabus for Hong Kong Secondary Schools (CDC, 1999a) and the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2002b) provide a new curriculum framework for English language teaching and learning in all Hong Kong schools. Such curriculum documents state explicitly the framework of TBLT as an innovative and ideal pedagogy in English language education. This has made a great impact on English language teaching and learning in Hong Kong classrooms.

However, any pedagogy laid down in curriculum documents (the 'planned curriculum') may not necessarily be implemented literally in the real teaching-learning process (the 'implemented curriculum'). Allwright (1986) as well as Burton and Nunan (1986) suggested the notion that curriculum planning equals teaching and that teaching equals learning was naïve. Nunan (1988:138) also pointed out that in the real world, the planned curriculum would be transformed by such things as the hidden agendas of the learners, the moment-by-moment realities of the learning process and the decisions made by teachers on the spur of the moment as they monitored and reacted to unfolding classroom events. Circumstances in the classroom are often less than ideal, i.e. they are not as they may be assumed in curriculum documents.

As Feez (1998:12) pointed out, the assumptions which underpin the curriculum framework in which teachers are working must affect their syllabus decisions. At the same time, they are likely to be influenced by their own interpretations of the curriculum and their own assumptions regarding the nature of language and language learning. Therefore, in designing a syllabus and in deciding on what methodology to use teachers will be drawing on both theory and practice. Effective teachers are those who selected strategically from the array of available approaches to ensure their learners had the best possible learning experiences and outcomes so they will tend to be eclectic in their classroom practice. It is no wonder that so many English teachers in Hong Kong are practising the structure-based language teaching methodology in the classrooms. Evans (1997) found that preparation for examinations was the real focus of the secondary English courses in Hong Kong, while the students' needs and interests were given least emphasis. Evans's findings also suggested that grammar and accuracy in written grammar exercises were still playing a fairly regular part in English lessons.

Alexander (2000:552) also suggested that a curriculum is best viewed as a series of translation, transposition and transformation. However faithful to curriculum documents teachers remained, Alexander argued, teaching was always an act of curriculum transformation. The degree of transformation varied but most were influenced by personal and local belief system that made the transformation radical. When asked to describe what TBLT is and how it is realised in the classroom, many Hong Kong English teachers are hard pressed to do so. This may partly reflect the fact that, as with CLT, there are numerous interpretations of and orientations to the concept. Multiple perspectives on and applications of TBLT is very likely a reality in Hong Kong classrooms.

Ellis (2003:321) regarded TBLT as a new and challenging pedagogic proposal to ELT practitioners. He argued that the practitioners could see TBLT as an entirely new idea irrespective of whether the proposal had already been adopted by other practitioners operating in different contexts. He quoted the example of TBLT's implementation in Japanese high schools as an innovation. In the light of the curriculum reform and the new English language curriculum documents released, TBLT has explicitly been made the official pedagogy for ELT in Hong Kong schools. It is certainly an innovation as far as most Hong Kong English teachers are concerned. This study seeks to shed light on how this recommended pedagogy has been implemented in a Hong Kong school context.

Having reviewed the literature relating to TBLT and the curriculum development of English language education in the Hong Kong context, the next chapter describes the methodology employed in this study, specifically the research procedures and the design of the research methods used in the data collection. Chapter 4 argues that the data collected in this study through the methodology chosen are sufficiently robust and reliable to serve the task of addressing the research questions. The chapter also discusses the strengths and limitations of the methodology, as well as the question whether it will allow me to generalise from the findings of the current study to other English language teaching contexts.

Chapter 4: Methodology

While Chapter 2 reviewed the literature providing a theoretical background to my research and Chapter 3 detailed the contextual factors specific to the Hong Kong context, this chapter presents the detailed plan for the study. This chapter describes the methodology employed in the study, providing the rationales of the research design, introduction to the subjects, an account of the procedures used and discussion of the limitations of the study. In doing so, it also provides a justification for the research methods and instruments adopted. This chapter describes the main study in detail. The main study attempted to inquire into the implementation processes of TBLT in a case study school in Hong Kong. It aimed to provide a detailed portrayal of how the English language curriculum was transformed into Hong Kong secondary school classrooms in one school through TBLT.

4.1 Rationales

The focus on context led me to adopt the case study as a naturalistic inquiry approach for this research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a naturalistic inquiry as a culturally driven approach to social research which involved an explanation of the social events and processes within a given setting. A naturalistic inquiry is culturally driven in that the researcher focuses primarily on the context. Bailey (2005:18) also stressed that 'the case study is a type of naturalistic inquiry that has been particularly important in second language acquisition research'.

The central focus of the intended case study was the study of the context for the implementation of TBLT in a Hong Kong school. According to Dey (1993), context is the key to the meaning to be understood if meaning is to be gained. The context is a complex but engaging site for inquiry. The role of the researcher is to interpret or

deconstruct the given context, and the ways in which life takes place from the point of view of the participants. In this research, I wanted to examine closely how English language teachers perceived TBLT and how TBLT was interpreted and transformed into practice under the current English language curriculum policy.

Whenever a researcher concentrates on how aspects of the social world are constructed, there must be an attempt to get inside the process of social construction by building up descriptions of how human beings engage in meaningful action and create a shared world (Hough, 2002:73). Because such an approach demands in-depth analysis of limited experience in the context in which it occurs, the approach requires a long-term involvement with the organisation to be studied and an adaptive research design. Because of the constraints of time, money and resources and the need to explore the school in sufficient depth, I decided to study the implementation of TBLT at the school at which I was teaching so that I would have optimum access and maximum time for data collection.

4.1.1 Language Classroom Research

Over the past two decades, the role of the teacher in classroom research has expanded greatly (Allwright, 1997; Bailey, 2005; Brown, 2002; Nunan, 1997a, 1997b). The field has moved from an experimentally motivated view of teachers primarily as subjects to a more inclusive view of teachers as partners in the research enterprise, or teachers as producers of research (Bailey, 2005; Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Brindley, 1991; Crookes, 1998; Freeman, 1998; Johnson, 1999). The language classroom, according to van Lier (1988:47), has been 'the gathering, for a given period of time, of two or more persons (one of whom assumes the role of instructor) for the purpose of language learning'. The classrooms, according to Gaies (1980), is the place where teachers and learners come

together and where language learning happens. Language classroom research is definitely the study of how language learning happens inside the classroom setting.

However, classroom research is loosely defined and has a chequered history. Many researchers considered classroom research as simply investigating what actually happens inside the classroom, i.e. the study of the one thousand and one things inside a classroom, *e.g.* seating arrangement, blackboard design or student discipline could all be regarded as classroom research. Some researchers were of the view that classroom research concentrates on the inputs and outputs of the classroom. Basically, classroom research is to understand the teaching and learning process going on in the classroom setting. I prefer taking Allwright and Bailey's views that classroom research includes:

> a whole range of studies that the emphasis is solidly on trying to understand what goes on in the classroom setting. Examples of the type of issues that have been studied so far include how teachers respond to learners' errors, how interaction occurs in classrooms, the type of linguistic input provided in classroom settings, the feelings of teachers and learners at various points during or after lessons, and so on. (Allwright and Bailey, 1991:2)

Although the focus of this classroom research was on classroom language teaching, contextual factors such as classroom interaction was also investigated.

Compared with the published classroom research in Western countries, relatively little research has been carried out in Hong Kong second language classrooms. First, in Chinese culture, teachers enjoy much respect in society. It is really difficult to locate published research on topics that are a challenge to their power and status in the classroom. Second, teachers may not welcome the findings from any research, especially if they reflect unfavourably on their practice as this may pose a risk to their career development. Third, findings may also cause embarrassment to the institution

employing the teachers. Even if individual teachers approve research, their institution may still disapprove of it so as to avoid any potentially undesirable consequences.

Being an English language teacher in Hong Kong, I enjoyed privileged access to secondary school classrooms during my research. In this school, the principal and all English language teachers supported the study because they were well informed of the whole project, its planning and design, from day one of the project. They understood that it was academic research carried out as part of my degree studies and it was a low risk study no matter what the findings were. This gave me an invaluable opportunity to engage in the role of teacher-as-researcher. Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggested that the teacher-as-researcher participates in a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken in social situations to improve the rationality and justice of teachers' own practices, and their understanding of these practices and of the situations in which the practices are carried out. This study was an inquiry-based one following a process of examining existing practices and evaluating the results, leading to an improvement cycle that could hopefully benefit both students and teachers. The research provided an insider's perspective on the implementation of TBLT. The findings and recommendations of this study are expected to contribute to the professional development of ELT practitioners in Hong Kong.

4.1.2 Case Study

This research was designed as case study of TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. Case studies have been extensively used by applied linguists (Bailey, 2005; Carless, 1999; Harklau, 2000; Nunan, 1992) as an effective research strategy to gain an in-depth understanding of second language learning and teaching. I decided to employ the case study research strategy for investigating the implementation of TBLT because I wanted

to cover its contextual conditions, believing that they might be highly pertinent. In fact, this approach was not new to Hong Kong's educational settings as Carless (1999) had also conducted a case study of three primary school teachers in Hong Kong.

According to Stake (1988:258), a case study is a 'study of a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at a time'. Yin (1994) also suggested that case studies were the preferred strategy when the researcher had little control over events, and when the focus was on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. It is suggested that when comparing a theory with an actual course of events a case study provides the best explanation of real-world phenomena, with the result potentially also applicable and generalisable to other situations.

I therefore considered that the implementation of TBLT in a school context was best investigated in a case study. First, a case study does not investigate all the details of each case and instead has a clear focus which serves as a lens through which I could study the implementation, especially as there are many contextual conditions obtaining in a school context. These conditions have a very complicated relationship to each other and it would not be sensible to attempt to investigate them all within the limited scope of a study such as this. Second, in a case study the aspect under focus could be examined within a clearly specified context, thus narrowing the scope of my research. Third, the aspect under focus had to be examined as part of a system rather than as an isolated factor (Wen, 2004:154). Phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable in real-life situations, and a case study would allow me to investigate the tangled relationship between the phenomenon (TBLT) and the context (school).

4.1.3 Data Collection

Doing research is essentially a matter of data collection and analysis. As language classroom research procedures have become more sophisticated, the value of multiple perspectives in data collection and analysis is recognised as an important methodological concept (Allwright & Bailey, 1991:73). Data may come from various sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts. The use of these data calls for different skills and methodological procedures. However, as no single data source has an overwhelming advantage over all the others, different data sources are best considered complementary. Researchers may easily be prone to misinterpretation if they limit themselves to a single source of data in a case study (Yin, 1994:78). To establish the construct validity and reliability of my research, 'triangulation' (Figure 3 as below) was adopted to govern the data collection of this research.

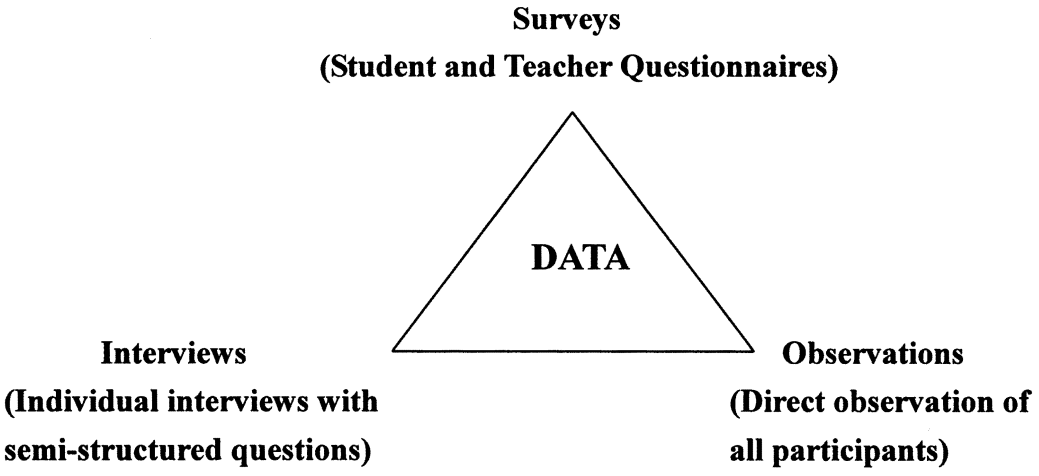

Figure 3: Data triangulation

I collected data from a variety of sources, availing myself of one of the major strengths of the case study approach. The use of multiple sources of evidence allowed me to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues pertaining

to my research topic. Most importantly, this allowed the development of converging lines of inquiry or the use of triangulation, which serves to increase the validity of the data collected and the findings generated. Being based on three different sources of information, my findings and conclusions are likely to be more convincing and reliable than they would or could be if based on a single source of data.

4.1.4 Research Methods

Three methods were employed to obtain the data for this research, namely survey, lesson observation and personal interview. These three methods are commonly used in case study research as they provide multiple sources of evidence for the phenomenon under investigation, in this case for the implementation of TBLT in a secondary school in Hong Kong.

Each method was employed using an independent set of research instruments, namely questionnaire, observation checklist and interview question form, yielding three sets of data. The three methods are described in the next sections.

Surveys

Using quantitative data to evaluate abstract constructs such as emotion, feeling and attitudes was a popular research method in social science research (Silverman, 1997). Using surveys is also an effective research method of collecting larger amount of quantitative data covering a wider spectrum of subjects. Two questionnaires were used as research instruments to obtain quantitative data from all English teachers in the case study school and the students being taught with TBLT. This would reveal their attitudes towards TBLT respectively.

Lesson Observations

In the social sciences, the typical method of studying people's behaviours is to observe and see how these behaviours function within a social setting. Similarly, in this study four teachers were observed in their lessons and how they practised TBLT was recorded using the Lesson Observation Checklist adapted from Part 2 of Spada and Frohlich's (1995) *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme: Coding Conventions and Applications* (see Appendix 4). This checklist helped me to record the occurrences of communicative teaching and learning features throughout the lessons in a systematic way. With the data I organised by reference to the checklist, the teaching was able to be further analysed and discussed in relation to the features of task and TBLT as developed on the basis of the literature.

Interviews

To ensure the reliability of the data to be gathered in interviews and to avoid any misunderstandings, I decided to conduct the interviews with the four teachers myself. As the interview was semi-structured, Questions to Guide the Teacher Interviews (see Appendix 5) was used to guide the questions. As the data previously collected in the surveys and the lesson observations had raised a number of questions, the personal interviews also provided an opportunity to clarify any problematic aspects of the data.

4.2 The School

The school in this case study is a government secondary school for students aged twelve to eighteen in Hong Kong. This was the school I had taught at for seventeen years as an English language teacher. I believed this research was conducted from a genuine insider's perspective.

The school is a secondary school using Chinese as medium of instruction (CMI). As mentioned in Chapter 3, secondary schools in Hong Kong can be broadly divided into two language streams: schools using English as medium of instruction (EMI) and schools using Chinese as medium of instruction (CMI). In EMI schools, students are expected to spend more time learning and using English in school, and of course they use English as a medium to learn all other subjects in their curriculum with the exception of Chinese language. In CMI schools, on the other hand, students study English as one of their academic subjects in the curriculum, and the rest of their subjects in Chinese. Hence, students in CMI schools have less exposure to English. In my case study school, a CMI school, English was therefore studied as one of many academic subjects. The students generally lacked opportunities to use English outside their English language lessons, and therefore the English language teaching methodology was crucial to the success of the students' learning of English. As a CMI school, the implementation of TBLT was faced with less than ideal conditions. In Hong Kong, over 75% of secondary schools are CMI schools so the conditions of this school were typical of the local context.

Based on the academic merits of students, Hong Kong secondary schools can also be categorised into three bands: from band 1 to band 3. The banding classification of a secondary school depends on the quality of its new intake at secondary one level each year. All primary school graduates in Hong Kong are allocated to three bands according to their academic performance. The top 33.3% of students are categorised as 'band 1', the next 33.3% as 'band 2' and the lowest 33.3% as 'band 3'. A school which takes in more band 1 primary school graduates than band 2 and band 3 together is categorised as a band 1 secondary school. Students in band 1 schools are expected to have better

academic potential and performance than their lower banding counterparts. Band 3 students usually encounter much more difficulty in their learning.

The case study school is a band 3 CMI secondary school. It is a typical low banding secondary school in Hong Kong. It is supposed of having less favourable teaching environment than the high banding schools. However, as a government school, it also has to adhere strictly to the central curriculum and policy mandated by the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR Government. In 2006, when the study was carried out, the school had 922 students enrolled. The school offered courses from secondary one to secondary seven levels. Graduates from this school might gain entrance to university if he or she passed the public examination after their secondary education. The school mainly enrolled students who had not performed well in their primary education. Over 95% of the 2006 secondary one intake fell into band 3 and the remaining 5% into band 2. About 15% of the student population that year were new immigrant children from Mainland China and they usually had little knowledge of English. The students in this school are predominantly male, with only a few girls admitted directly to the sixth form.

4.3 The Participants

4.3.1 Teacher Subjects

The teachers who specialised in teaching English language at the school constituted the 'teacher subjects'. There were altogether ten teacher subjects, and they were ethnic Chinese. The questionnaire response rate from teachers was 100%, comprising seven females and three males. Their English language teaching experience ranged from two to twenty-four years. All had received formal teacher training in English language teaching.

Four teachers who claimed to practise TBLT in their questionnaires were selected for later lesson observations and personal interviews. These four teachers, two females and two males, were chosen because they claimed that they were currently practising TBLT with their students in the classrooms. They had at least five years of English language teaching experience in Hong Kong. From hereon, they are referred to as Teacher A, B, C and D and their classes as Class A, B, C and D respectively. As all four teachers taught a secondary three class, four secondary three classes were selected for lesson observation and their students as the student subjects.

4.3.2 Student Subjects

The selection of the student subjects ultimately depended on which teachers had indicated that they practised TBLT during their English lessons. It was a coincidence that the four teachers all taught a class at secondary three level. The students from the four classes were selected for the case study and I had a total of 158 student subjects. Classes A and B had 40 students each and Classes C and D had 34 students each, a distribution of students that suited the subsequent data analyses. Furthermore, the students were at the same level and were doing similar tasks during the lesson observations. This also helped achieve a degree of standardisation in the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in student's questionnaires and lesson observations.

The students' English language learning experience ranged from two to ten years. Most had learned English for eight to ten years because English was a compulsory language subject in both the Hong Kong primary and secondary school curriculum. Those with less experience were mainly newly arrived students from Mainland China

where English was not usually taught in primary schools. It was reasonable to expect that they had more difficulties in learning English than the students born in Hong Kong.

4.4 The Procedures

The study followed a triangulation approach which aimed to provide a detailed and thorough portrayal of the implementation of TBLT in a specific school. The major research instruments, the teacher and student questionnaires, were produced after the review of the literature and policy documents about TBLT. The research methods include:

1. Teacher Questionnaire to investigate the English language teachers' attitudes towards TBLT;
2. Student Questionnaire to investigate the English language learners' attitudes towards TBLT;
3. Lesson observations of TBLT in the classrooms with the help of an Observation Checklist;
4. Interviews with the teachers who taught the classes and lessons observed, with the help of the Questions to Guide the Teacher Interviews.

4.4.1 Teacher Questionnaire

A total of ten questionnaires were delivered by hand to all the English language teachers at the school, all of which were returned to me, thus producing a response rate of 100%. The Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was adapted from the attitudes and motivation questionnaire by Gardner & Lambert (1972) and the attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitudes by Karavas (1996).

Karavas's work is well-known of studying the attitudes of teachers teaching English as a foreign language in Greece. Nowadays, her questionnaire is considered as an effective research instrument to survey teachers' attitudes towards language teaching. For the motivation, its classification is still far from uniform in standards and it is particularly difficult to define in second language education. In early 1970s, Gardner and Lambert (1972) established the theory of integrative and instrumental motivation. The basic principle is that attitude and motivation influence second language acquisition. Although there have been a number of researchers (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991, Dornyei, 1994, 1998, Oxford, 1996) who also attempted to analyse motivation and second language learning from different perspectives, the motivation process at the language learning level can be described comprehensively by using the traditional concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation. Motivation is such a dynamic construct in nature and varies from moment to moment depending on the learning context and task. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely conceptualise what motivation is. As different researchers have different operational definitions, I believe integrative-instrumental motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1972) is still a reliable and operationalisable construct of the whole constructive motivation. Therefore, the Teacher Questionnaire and the Student Questionnaire in the current research were also adapted from Gardner and Lambert's.

The questionnaire was written in English since I believed that all teachers should be able to understand each statement and answer it without difficulties. The Teacher Questionnaire can be broadly divided into two major parts: (1) personal information, and (2) understanding of and beliefs about TBLT. Part 1 was intended to provide me with the information needed to select the teachers who claimed that they used TBLT in their classes for further data collection, that is, lesson observations and personal

interviews. The personal information of the subjects would also allow me to investigate whether there was any correlation between actual practice of TBLT, previous ELT training and teaching experience, *etc.*

The sixteen statements on attitudes in Part 2 were intended to measure the teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards TBLT in their language lessons. Half of the statements were positive and half were negative towards the use of TBLT. The statements can be grouped into five major areas: communicative activities, error correction, learners' roles, teachers' roles and grammar emphasis. The teachers were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with the statements by giving a response on a 5-point Likert scale. Such a scale turns qualitative data (i.e. a respondent's attitude to some phenomenon) into quantitative data (i.e. a respondent's response on a scale) for statistical analysis.

As the statements in the questionnaire were intended to investigate the teachers' understanding of and general attitudes towards TBLT, the wording of the statements was as clear and unambiguous as I could make them so that the respondents would all interpret them similarly and be able to state their responses clearly, and thus be suitable for analysis. Instead of circling the available options, the table containing the statements was further simplified so that the subjects could just insert a tick or check their choice for each statement.

4.4.2 Student Questionnaire

A total of 158 questionnaires were handed to the students in the four classes selected for lesson observation to investigate their attitudes towards TBLT and English learning. The Student Questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was also adapted from the Attitudes and Motivation Questionnaire in Second Language Learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The questionnaire was translated into Chinese (see also Appendix 3) so that the students could understand the meaning of each question clearly and answer the questions without any assistance. The Student Questionnaire was also divided into two parts: (1) personal information, and (2) attitudes towards English learning. Part 1 relating to personal information was to assess the students' English learning experience, and the 21 statements in Part 2 were to survey their attitudes towards English learning in the lessons that were claimed by their teacher to use TBLT.

The wording of the statements was as clear and unambiguous as I could make them so that the student respondents would all interpret them similarly and be able to state their responses clearly, and thus be suitable for analysis. I wanted to find out whether TBLT correlated with the students' motivation for English learning. As Littlewood (1984) pointed out, 'motivation for learning is the crucial factor which determines the success of second or foreign language learning' (1984:53). Among the statements, due emphasis was given to students' motivations and habits of English language learning.

To ensure that the student subjects could fill in the Student Questionnaire without any difficulty, I piloted the questionnaires in another class at the same school. The pilot study was done a week before giving out the Student Questionnaire to the student subjects. The pilot group gave useful feedback as some Chinese terms were too difficult for the students to comprehend, for example, the official Chinese translation of the term 'communicative activity' was new to the students. I replaced the term with the more popular term 'pair and group work activity' in Chinese. Similar to the arrangement of the Teacher Questionnaire, the table was further simplified so that the subjects could just insert a tick to indicate or check their choice for each statement.

4.4.3 Lesson Observation

In contrast to researchers working under laboratory conditions, those employing descriptive methods in research generally regard the context in which events occur to be all-important. I strongly believe that an effective way to retain the real-life depth, richness and roundedness of the original events is to invest time and effort in recording the required data in the context that was actually experienced by the research subjects. Therefore, to have a better understanding of classroom research, classroom observation was an essential research tool in my study. Alexander (2000:269) suggested that we must listen as well as look in classroom research. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:117) also stated that observation was an extremely handy tool for researchers in the world of the classroom. They expressed their belief that observation could allow researchers to understand much more about what went on in complex real-world situations than they could ever discover simply by asking questions of those who experienced them, and by looking only at what was said about them in questionnaires and interviews.

Nevertheless, the most appealing aspect of observation was that it could get the researcher actively involved in the setting rather than standing on the sidelines. Being the observer, I could collect data about people's actions in the school, interactions and decisions in context and at the time and in the location they occurred. As a result, I knew more about my research topic because I could experience it, participate in it, share the experience with the very people I was researching and saw all from their points of view.

The four teachers who had been invited to take part in the lesson observation process were given notice of the planned observation two weeks before the lessons. As a study following naturalistic inquiry approach, the teachers were advised to deliver the materials according to their personal teaching schedule.

First of all, it was suggested that the teachers inform their students about the presence of an observer before the observation took place. This was done so the observation would not come as a great surprise to the students, which might affect the normal performance of the class. During the lessons, I sat at the back of the classroom to minimise any disturbance or disruption of the lesson. Also, I did not participate in the classroom activities to prevent any interference with the observation data. I observed the class using the Lesson Observation Checklist adapted from Spada and Frohlich (1995). The number of occurrences of each classroom feature was counted to see whether the lessons were rich in TBLT features. I piloted the observation checklist in another class before using it in the experimental classes. I found that it was quite impossible to fill in the observation checklist during the lessons. Video recording was inevitable for a reliable lesson analysis. With the consent of the teachers, recordings were made to confirm the number of features that occurred in the lessons. The amount of time given to teachers' and students' talk respectively could be obtained from the video-recordings to see whether the lessons were teacher-centred or learner-centred.

4.4.4 Interview

Interviews have long been used in research as a way of obtaining detailed information about a topic or a subject. As Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:44) pointed out, 'while other research instruments focus on the surface elements of what is happening, interviews give the researcher more of an insight into the meaning and significance of what is happening'.

After the lesson observations, individual interviews were arranged to discuss the teachers' beliefs and practice of TBLT. The interviews aimed at investigating the subjective attitudes of the four teachers towards TBLT and the perceived advantages and

disadvantages in using TBLT. In the interviews, a set of prepared questions (see Appendix 5) relating to the teachers' attitudes, perceived advantages and problems of implementing TBLT in class were sought. This interview was drawn up after the lesson observations. The lessons observed were referred to so that any aspects resulting from the observation could be clarified. Only semi-structured questions were asked to ensure that the teachers had the flexibility to elaborate their points of views. As the four teachers were Cantonese-speaking Chinese, the interviews were held in Cantonese to let the subjects express their ideas clearly. The interviews were arranged in a vacant classroom after school.

Although unstructured interviews are by definition more flexible, giving interviewees maximum freedom to guide the discussion, I decided not to conduct the interviews in this way because it could be difficult to get the discussion back on track if it moved away from the key subject matter. For this reason the interviews were designed to be semi-structured ones. Both closed and open-ended questions (see Appendix 5) were asked so that the subjects could still express their views and opinions freely without the risk of the interview getting off-track. All responses were jotted down in point form for later reference and analysis rather than audio-recorded; see below for an explanation of this decision.

4.5 Issues and Limitations

This section outlines some of the issues in doing qualitative research and the limitations of the approach adopted in this study. The issues include trustworthiness and transferability of the data and ethical concerns. The limitations include the time span selected for conducting the study, the cooperativeness of the subjects and the resources available to me as researcher.

4.5.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in the context of the present study refers to the degree to which the data obtained and the interpretations based on them captured reality as seen from the perspectives of the participating teachers. Bassey (1999), drawing on the work of others including Guba and Lincoln (1994), who originated the notion of trustworthiness, proposed several means by which the trustworthiness of a study can be enhanced. Similarly, Merriam (1998) suggested six measures, such as triangulation and long-term observation, for enhancing the trustworthiness of a study. The suggestions made by Bassey (1999) and Merriam (1998) can be grouped under two related headings. The first refers to the extent to which sufficient, valid and meaningful data have been secured for analysis, and the second to the extent to which subjectivity on the part of the researcher has been minimised in collecting and analysing the data.

In relation to the first heading, insufficient rapport between researcher and participants has been cited as one of the key obstacles to gather valid data (Glense, 1999). The four teachers in this study had qualifications in English language teaching and had been known professionally to the researcher for at least five years. They seemed to understand the purpose and importance of this research. Due to the professional training they had received and the information provided to them (see Appendices 5, 6 and 7), they understood that evaluation of their teaching performance was not part of the study. They seemed to trust the researcher and were willing to share their personal views and feelings, including sensitive issues related to their practice. In addition, throughout this study I worked to maintain a non-evaluative, empathetic and open stance to what the subjects revealed about their practice.

In relation to the second heading, i.e. minimising the researcher's subjectivity in data collection and in making interpretations and analyses of the data, I realised that in my role as the 'research instrument' (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003) formulating the problem researched, selecting the design used, identifying the participants, gathering data, summarising the data and making interpretations, I was possibly influenced by personal preferences, values, attitudes and biases. In response, I behaved as an involved but detached researcher (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) throughout the study, taking a reflective stance, trying to be aware of my own views and biases and to avoid how these might influence the data collected and the interpretations made. In addition, member checks (Merriam, 1998) were conducted in which the data obtained and the interpretations made were discussed with the participants regarding whether the data and interpretations matched the views and experiences of the participants. For example, when information had been gathered whose meaning was not clear, I would seek clarifications from the teaches, thus ensuring the accuracy and objectivity of my findings (Sowell, 2001). I submit that the issue of the trustworthiness of a study has been adequately addressed through the measures outlined above.

4.5.2 Ethics

Ethics in research is an important professional and legal concern. Because of the different nature, types, purposes and recipients of studies, the ethical concerns can vary greatly from study to study. As this study concerns school students below eighteen years of age and teachers' professional practice, the rights and protection of the participants are the main concerns.

To ensure the protection of participants, approval for undertaking this study was received from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Technology,

Sydney in January 2006. The data collection took place only after approval had been given by the Ethics Committee. To respect the participants' rights and privacy, it was important to be concerned about gaining the participants' informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of the data, and protecting the identity of the participants. It was imperative that the identity of the teacher and student participants not be revealed or that the data be disclosed to others. On the other hand, the study participants were to be fully informed of the purpose of the study and of the research methods used. They were given an Information Sheet about the study (Appendix 6) and asked to sign a Consent Form (Teacher Consent Form or Student Consent Form) prior to taking part in this study (Appendices 7, 8 and 9). It was made clear to all potential participants that they could refuse to answer any question at any point if they felt uncomfortable, and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. As the student participants were minors, a signed Parent and Student Consent Form was obtained from each student, with signature required from both student and a parent. To ensure adequate understanding of the terms by the students and their parents, the Information Sheet (Appendix 6) and the Parent and Student Consent Form (Appendix 9) were translated into their mother language, that is, Chinese. The name of the school was not disclosed in any documents issued to anyone outside the study and all personal information about the participants was kept confidential.

4.5.3 Issue of Transferability

The purpose of this study was primarily to explore and understand the professional practice of a group of English language teachers in relation to how they perceived and enacted TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. At the same time, in line with Erickson's (1986) notion of 'concrete universals', the findings obtained from the in-depth documentation of teachers practising TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school

should ideally also apply to other teachers if those teachers are studied in similar ways to produce 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973), and if they are also teaching in similar contexts to the case study school.

The findings of this study potentially have significant implications for other schools, in line with Merriam's notion (1998) of 'naturalistic generalisation', wherein transferability from a thoroughly studied case to target cases recognises similarities of issues in similar and dissimilar contexts, though such generalisations only serve as guidelines in exploring how a target case might behave rather than as prediction of how a target case will behave. This kind of transferability is similar to Bassey's (1999) view of 'fuzzy generalisation' wherein generalisation is made in terms of possibilities but not certainty.

Nevertheless, the best way to ensure transferability of a study's findings is to maximise the diversity of perspectives with the design of multiple sites and cases. The extent to which the participants chosen in this study are typical of Hong Kong schools is difficult to ascertain, as the school and the participants were recruited through convenience sampling, dependent on the principal and English panel chairperson of the school who in this case were willing to participate in the study.

4.5.4 Limitations

Unavoidably, in any case study, there are substantial practical, theoretical and political problems in gaining access to organisations and in managing the organisational intervention that such research must constitute (Hough, 2002:79). This research is no exception. The following are some of the limitations I identified in my research design.

First, studies of teachers' beliefs in any educational settings cannot assume a rationalistic and cooperative paradigm. This includes conflicts of interests, values,

feelings and actions. There is unlikely to be a uniform school culture but rather a mosaic of various conflicting stories. I could only design my research to reflect its context as truthfully as possible but data and findings can never be guaranteed to be accurate.

Second, this research aimed to build up knowledge of how to implement TBLT based on the experience one Hong Kong school. However, I must accept the fact that what was being studied in this particular site and at this particular time influenced how this research evolved. During the lesson observation phase of my study, the school term had already reached its final month and most of the teachers were preparing their students for examinations. Some of the teachers focused on revising the language structures with the class for the sake of examination. I could see very little TBLT, contrary to what they had claimed in the questionnaires. It was also difficult for the teachers to find time for interviews as they were all very busy in setting examination papers, marking assignments and preparing annual reports. I had to respect all these preoccupations and rearranged the scheduled interview times if the subjects were inconvenienced by them.

Third, allocating sufficient time to get to know the research site is crucial to case study research. I was fortunate in that I was full-time teaching staff at the school during the research period and had ample time available to make contact with the teachers and students. This proved to be essential in allowing my research to become known to all my colleagues and in opening up a sustained period of engagement with the English language teaching of other teachers. In practical terms, I could not begin my lesson observation until I had obtained the data from the surveys. Then I had to arrange convenient time slots mutually agreed with teachers for lesson observation. It took me about three weeks to arrange this and another two months for the completion of the lesson observation process in different classes. Interviews were arranged after

individual observations but they were not finished until the start of the long summer break in July 2006.

Fourth, the school can be an environment fraught with politics and powers, which is not conducive to academic research, for example, leading to a mismatch between the democratic design of the research and the command model of the school. In this study, some teachers might have escaped being selected for my in-depth study by indicating a preference for more structured and grammar-based teaching in their questionnaire responses. Their claims not to practise TBLT surely did no harm to their career prospects or job security. Those willing to indicate a preference for TBLT possibly did this to show that they adhered to the policies mandated in the curriculum reform in their practice.

Finally, confidentiality played an important role in gathering data from my research subjects. I chose not to reveal any of my research data to the school management in order to gain their trust and to relieve any stress their participation might have put them under. As the in-depth interviews were crucial for revealing any secrets or misunderstandings of the questionnaire and observational data, I decided not to audio-record the interviews.

Without adequate resources and labouring under time constraints, some departure from the originally planned research design was considered necessary to complete the process. In making final claims about the integrity, validity and utility of this case study, it is really important to consider that this case study can only tell the story as I saw it and only ever develop partial representations or constructions of reality. In addition, as the data were collected in 2006, they represent that period only. Any subsequent change of circumstances at this school could not be the concern of the current study.

This chapter provides the justifications for the types of data collected for this study. These data are both quantitative and qualitative data from the surveys, the lesson observations and the personal interviews. They were found to be sufficient to construct a detailed portrayal of how TBLT was actually implemented in a particular school in Hong Kong. The next chapter presents the data collected and the findings from the study. These data form the evidence of this research and the basis for the discussion in Chapter 6 and the conclusions and recommendations made in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents both the analyses of the data collected concerning the implementation of TBLT in the case study school and discusses the findings. The three types of research methods used in the investigation, including survey, lesson observation and interview, yielded both quantitative and qualitative data, and the analyses presented are appropriate to the particular type of data collected.

The study had access to multiple sources of evidence for the implementation of TBLT at the case study school, which is one of its major strengths. By triangulating the data, the study was also able to address the issue of construct validity, since the multiple sources of data provide different measures of the same phenomenon. Firstly, surveys were conducted to investigate the attitudes of the teachers and students respectively towards TBLT. The Teacher Questionnaire was administered to all ten English teachers specialising in English language teaching in the case study school and the Student Questionnaire was administered to all 158 students in the four secondary three classes chosen for lesson observation. The questions asked mainly concerned the features of TBLT as gleaned in the literature review. Secondly, observations of the lesson of the four selected teachers provided opportunities to observe the practice of TBLT in a real classroom with real students. A Lesson Observation Checklist was used to obtain the data for the analysis of the communicative features in their lessons. Thirdly, personal interviews with the four teachers after the lesson observations were carried out to obtain qualitative data for an in-depth understanding of the teachers' beliefs. The data obtained through the three research methods were also compared to see if the teachers practised what they had claimed to be doing in the initial questionnaires.

5.1 Teacher Questionnaire

A Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was constructed to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards TBLT. The statements made in the questionnaire were adapted from the attitude scales by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Karavas (1996), with special reference to the present Hong Kong English language teaching context. This research instrument was administered to ten teacher respondents.

Table 3 presents a classification of teachers' attitudes into the five main features of TBLT. For each feature there are both positive and negative statements. For example, regarding the feature of communicative activities in TBLT, Statements 1, 3, 15 and 16 are positive statements and Statements 5, 6, 8 and 13 are negative. If the teacher subject agreed or strongly agreed with a positive statement in communicative activities, this shows that he/ she had a favourable attitude towards this feature of TBLT, and *vice versa*. In the questionnaire, these statements were shuffled to avoid any speculation at to the 'correct' answers by the subjects.

Table 3: Analysis of statements in Teacher Questionnaire

Feature		Statement No.
1. Communicative activities	+	1, 3, 15, 16
	-	5, 6, 8,13
2. Error correction	+	12
	-	14
3. Learners' roles	+	3, 4, 15
	-	13
4. Teachers' roles	+	3, 10, 11
	-	2, 7, 14
5. Grammar emphasis	+	12
	-	6, 9

The Teacher Questionnaire made the attitudes of teachers towards TBLT measurable by creating quantitative data that could then be subjected to statistical

analysis. In order to examine the attitudes of teachers towards TBLT, the descriptions and tables below present the results from the teachers' questionnaires. (For the complete results obtained by means of the Teacher Questionnaire, see Appendix 11.) Since there are both positive and negative statements in the questionnaire, the analysis of the data according to the five major features of TBLT creates a detailed picture of teachers' attitudes.

5.1.1 Communicative Activities

There are eight statements in the Teacher Questionnaire about the communicative activities adopted in TBLT. Table 4 gives the percentages of teachers agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. Four statements (Statements 1, 3, 15 and 16) are positive statements while the other four (Statements 5, 6, 8 and 13) are negative. A majority of the teachers agreed with the positive statements and disagreed with the negative statements. All the teachers agreed that there should always be a clear objective in doing a task, and that pair and group work activities were essential in TBLT. No teacher disagreed with the positive statements concerning this aspect of TBLT.

Table 4: Teachers' views of classroom communicative activities

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
1. The objective of doing a task should always be clear.	40	60	0	0	0
3. A task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication.	20	60	20	0	0
15. Learners acquire language most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else.	30	60	10	0	0
16. Pair or group work is often a component of task.	30	70	0	0	0
5. A task seldom requires any oral and/or written communications among learners.	0	10	10	60	20
6. A task always provides linguistic output.	10	10	10	60	10
8. The output of a task is always predictable.	0	10	10	70	10
13. Learners can perform tasks well without interacting with the others.	0	0	0	20	80

5.1.2 Error Correction

In TBLT teachers do not put emphasis on correcting structural errors immediately. Making errors is regarded as a normal part of language learning. Thus, correction of errors is minimised so that students can utilise their own language ability and the development of fluency is fostered.

Table 5: Teachers' views of error correction

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
12. The instruction of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form.	10	30	0	40	20
14. A teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make in the task.	30	60	0	10	0

In Table 5, Statement 12 is a positive one and Statement 14 a negative one in the area of error correction. Although four of the ten teachers surveyed by means of the Teacher Questionnaire agreed that they should focus on meaning rather than form in task-based lessons, the other six teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Clearly, the teachers had diverse opinions on the focus on form or meaning in TBLT. Overwhelmingly, the majority of the teachers (90%) agreed that they should correct all the grammatical errors students make in the task. Only 10% of the teachers disagreed with the correction of students' errors (Statement 14).

5.1.3 Learners' Roles

In TBLT classrooms learners are not only recipients of the lessons but also contributors to the lesson by participating in the learning activities. The majority of the teachers agreed with the positive statements (Statements 3, 4 and 15) in Table 6 and all disagreed with the only negative statement (Statement 13) concerning this aspect of TBLT. This shows that the teachers shared a belief of what learners' roles are and in the students' learning independence, as suggested in TBLT. The majority (80%) of the teachers agreed that a task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication. Also, the majority (90%) agreed that learners are considered to acquire

language most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for communicative tasks. None of the teachers approved of Statement 13 that learners can perform tasks well without interacting with others.

Table 6: Teachers' views of learners' roles

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
3. A task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication.	20	60	20	0	0
4. A task is to help learners become competent in purposeful communication in real situations.	70	30	0	0	0
15. Learners acquire language most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else.	30	60	10	0	0
13. Learners can perform tasks well without interacting with the others.	0	0	0	20	80

5.1.4 Teachers' Roles

Statements 3, 10, 11 in Table 7 are positive ones and Statements 2, 7 and 14 are negative ones.

Table 7: Teachers' views of their own roles

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
3. A task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication.	20	60	20	0	0
10. Using authentic materials, *e.g.* radio broadcast, in the task is more desirable.	30	60	10	0	0
11. A task-based language lesson should have a stated purpose of communication.	30	70	0	0	0
2. A task should be something measurable and correspond to the teaching objective.	30	50	10	10	0
7. A teacher should always decide which type of tasks for use in their lessons, *e.g.* pre-task activity, structured task or communicative task.	20	60	0	10	10
14. A teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make in the task.	30	60	0	10	0

The data show that all English teachers at the school had opinions of their roles that were different from those suggested by the TBLT literature. While the majority of the ten teacher respondents expressed their agreement with the positive Statements 3, 10 and 11, the majority also supported the negative Statements 2, 7 and 14.

Teachers seemed confused among themselves regarding their role as TBLT teachers. On the one hand, the majority of teachers agreed that they should design measurable tasks and use authentic materials for students to communicate so that they could accomplish purposeful and meaningful tasks themselves (Statements 3, 10 and 11). On the other hand, the majority of the teachers also claimed that they should always

decide the tasks at all stages for their students and correct all grammatical errors students make (Statements 7 and 14). The observed lessons were overwhelmingly teacher-centred. The majority of the ten teacher respondents also reserved the meaning of a task for something measurable (Statement 2). Although teachers favoured the perceived teachers' roles in TBLT, they still inclined to the traditional teacher roles as authority, instructor and knowledge-giver in practice.

5.1.5 Grammar

TBLT lessons do not emphasise grammar as much as traditional English lessons. This is because TBLT regards grammar as a means for achieving successful communication instead of regarding it as the whole content of a language. Many people misunderstand this to mean that TBLT pays no attention to grammar. In fact, grammatical competence is one of the competencies within the theoretical framework of communicative competence as mentioned in Chapter 2.

Table 8: Teachers' views of grammar

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
12. The instruction of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form.	10	30	0	40	20
6. A task always provides linguistic output.	10	10	10	60	10
9. A grammar exercise alone can be a task.	10	50	10	20	10

In Table 8, the teachers tended to agree with the degree of emphasis on grammar in TBLT, and the majority disagreed with the statement that the instructions of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form (Statement 12, Table 8). A majority (60%) of the teacher respondents believed that a grammar exercise alone could also be claimed as a task (Statement 9). They obviously put great emphasis on the role

of grammar in their English language teaching. However, 70% of the respondents also disagreed that a task always provided a linguistic output (Statement 6). This reflects the fact that their implementation of TBLT in practice is dubious.

5.1.6 Overall Attitudes

The teacher respondents generally had favourable attitudes towards the aspects of communicative activities and learners' roles in TBLT. The questionnaire data in Table 9 shows to what extent the subjects agreed or disagreed with the positive statements about TBLT.

Table 9: Scores for positive statements in Teacher Questionnaire

Positive statements	Agreement (Strongly agree & Agree) %	Disagreement (Strongly disagree & Disagree) %
1	100	0
3	80	0
4	100	0
10	90	0
11	100	0
12	40	60
15	90	0
16	100	0
Average Score	87.5	7.5

An average 87.5% of responses agreed with the positive statements in the Teacher Questionnaire while an average 7.5% of responses disagreed, and just 5% neither agreed nor disagreed. The result indicates that the English teachers in this school generally had a clear understanding of TBLT. However, they still held to the traditional belief that teachers should stand between their students and any errors and no concession should be granted to any grammatical mistake made by their students. This could explain why the

majority of the respondents disagreed with positive Statement 12. The teachers' views of their own roles (Table 7) also indicate their shared view that they are the authority and knowledge givers to students rather than facilitators of learning.

In this school, teachers were quite consistent in all five areas. Since there was no overall disagreement in any of these five areas, it can be concluded that the subjects generally favoured TBLT.

5.2 Student Questionnaire

The statements of the Student Questionnaire (see Appendix 3) were designed according to the major features of TBLT. The statements were divided into six areas: communicative activity, error correction, learners' roles, teacher's roles, grammar and learners' factors. Each area had both positive and negative statements.

Table 10: Analysis of statements in Student Questionnaire

Area		Statement No.
1. Communicative activities	+	**6, 17**
	_	**11, 12, 19**
2. Error correction	+	**1, 13, 18**
	_	**9**
3. Learners' roles	+	**3, 6**
	_	**10, 11, 12, 16, 20**
4. Teachers' roles	+	**6, 18**
	_	**10, 16**
5. Grammar emphasis	+	**18**
	_	**5, 7, 14, 15**
6. Learners' motivation		**2, 8**
Learners' experience		**4, 11**
Learning materials		**21**

The Student Questionnaire made the attitudes of students towards TBLT measurable by creating quantitative data that could then be subjected to statistical

analysis. Table 10 presents the breakdown of 21 statements into the five major features of TBLT and a special category concerning learners' factors and their learning materials. (For the complete results obtained by means of the Student Questionnaire, see Appendix 12.)

5.2.1 Communicative Activities

In the area of communicative activities, the results obtained from the student respondents were quite consistent. As shown in Table 11, half of the students preferred pair or group work activities (Statement 6), with 36.7% believing that pair and group work could help them communicate in English while 43.7% disagreed with this point (Statement 17). This indicates that the students held diverse opinions on whether pair and group work were the preferred activities in classroom language teaching and learning.

Table 11: Students' views of communicative activities

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
6. I prefer pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher.	18.4	31.6	13.3	22.2	14.6
17. Pair and group work help me communicate in English.	12	24.7	19.6	31	12.7
11. I seldom use English to communicate in my English lessons.	11.4	14.6	7	48.1	19
12. Pair and group work waste a lot of my learning time in class.	20.9	19.6	12	34.8	12.7
19. Pair and group work cause discipline problem in class so it should be avoided.	25.9	28.5	10.8	32.9	1.9

Although the majority of the students disagreed that pair and group work wasted a lot of time (Statement 12) and agreed that pair and group work might cause discipline

problem (Statement 19), 40.5% of the students held an opposing view to Statement 12 and 54.4% to Statement 19. This implies that the students did not have much experience of language learning through communicative activities. They might expect that pair and group activities in class could help them with language learning but they did not have enough confidence to reject the disadvantages for the sake of classroom communicative activities.

5.2.2 Error Correction

In the area of error correction, Statements 1, 13 and 18 are positive and Statement 9 negative; see Table 12. Students had diverse opinions on this issue. While the majority of students (69.6%) thought that teachers should accept any possible answers that were relevant to a task (Statement 1), 57.6% of students also disagreed that teachers should neglect their minor mistakes and appreciate their fluency instead (Statement 18). Statement 13 also produced diverse opinions, with 48.1% agreeing and 46.8% disagreeing that errors were a normal part of language learning. And 92.4% of students agreed that their teachers should correct any mistakes they had made for the sake of improving their English in the future.

Table 12: Students' views of error correction

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
1. I think the teacher should accept any possible answers which are relevant to a task.	39.9	29.7	3.8	13.9	12.7
13. Errors are a normal part of my language learning.	27.2	20.9	5.1	25.9	20.9
18. The teacher should appreciate my fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes.	17.1	18.4	7	47.5	10.1
9. The teacher should correct every grammatical error I make so that I can improve my English in future.	42.4	50	1.9	5.7	0

The results displayed in Table 12 suggest that students generally did not favour the error correction principle suggested by TBLT. This confirms the findings obtained through the Teacher Questionnaire (see Section 5.1). The students were possibly used to learning in a teacher-dominated environment, with teachers correcting every mistake they made in their language learning process.

Moreover, the students held the traditional belief that language teachers were obliged to correct their grammatical mistakes, with 92.4% of the students (Statement 9) agreeing that error correction could improve their English learning. This is probably the biggest obstacle to TBLT because teachers would be condemned for not correcting the students' mistakes. On the other hand, students might also be discouraged from taking the risk of using unfamiliar language structures to accomplish their tasks in the classroom. This is surely not a desirable environment for TBLT implementation.

5.2.3 Learners' Roles

As shown in Table 13, students shared a favourable attitude towards pair and group work, with 50% of students preferring pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher (Statement 6). However, diverse opinions were also obtained in response to the negative Statement 12, with 40.5% of students believing that pair and group work wasted their learning time in class while 47.5% of students held the opposite view. In addition, the majority of the subjects also agreed with the other negative statements (Statements 10, 16 and 20).

Table 13: Students' views of their own roles

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
3. I always understand the purpose of doing a task in the lesson.	15.2	34.2	7.6	26.6	16.5
6. I prefer pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher.	18.4	31.6	13.3	22.2	14.6
10. The teacher cannot fulfil the needs of every student because of the large class size.	22.2	24.7	13.9	26.6	12.7
11. I seldom use English to communicate in my English lessons.	11.4	14.6	7	48.1	19
12. Pair and group work waste a lot of my learning time in class.	20.9	19.6	12	34.8	12.7
16. Language is acquired most effectively through direct or explicit teaching.	13.3	43.7	8.2	17.1	17.7
20. In pair and group work activities, we tend to use the mother tongue without the teacher's noticing.	24.7	27.8	5.1	23.4	19

According to Statements 16 and 20, the students still had a preference for the traditional teacher-centred classroom. For example, 52.5% of the students said that they tended to use their mother tongue in pair or group work without their teachers' supervision (Statement 20), and 57% of the students agreed with the statement that language is acquired most effectively through explicit and direct teaching (Statement 16).

5.2.4 Teachers' Roles

Table 14 displays the results of students' responses to statements concerning their perception of their teachers' roles, with 50% of students preferring pair and group work

to listening to their teacher with 36.8% of the students disagreed with the statement (Statement 6).

Table 14: Students' views of teachers' roles

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
6. I prefer pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher.	18.4	31.6	13.3	22.2	14.6
18. The teacher should appreciate my fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes.	17.1	18.4	7	47.5	10.1
10. The teacher cannot fulfil the needs of every student because of the large class size.	22.2	24.7	13.8	26.6	12.7
16. Language is acquired most effectively through direct or explicit teaching.	13.3	43.7	8.2	17.1	17.7

However, students were also sceptical whether they could learn English effectively through pair or group work activities, with 57% of students also believing in the effectiveness of explicit and direct teaching (Statement 16).

5.2.5 Grammar

As shown in Table 15, only 35.5% of the students agreed that the teacher should appreciate their fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes (Statement 18). Students still shared the belief that grammatical correctness was the most important criterion for good English.

Table 15: Students' views of grammar

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
18. The teacher should appreciate my fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes.	17.1	18.4	7	47.5	10.1
5. Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion for good English.	29.7	31	10	29.1	0
7. My ultimate goal in learning English is to master the grammar rules.	36.1	27.8	11.4	14.6	15.8
14. Accuracy in grammar is more important than fluency in using English.	19.6	45.6	5.7	17.1	12
15. By mastering the rules of grammar, I am able to communicate with a native English speaker.	17.1	35.4	10.8	22.8	13.9

For the negative Statements 5, 7, 14 and 15, the results are consistent. For example, 60.7% of the students agreed that grammatical correctness was the most important criterion for good English (Statement 5), whereas 52.5% agreed that they could communicate with a native speaker by mastering the rules of grammar (Statement 15). The majority of the students still believed that grammar was the most important aspect of language learning and mastering grammar rules and accuracy was the ultimate goal in learning English (see Statements 7 and 14).

5.2.6 Learners' Motivation

An investigation of learners' motivation is relevant to this study because I needed to know more about the students' attitudes towards the English language in order to answer the question whether students held favourable attitudes towards TBLT or not.

Table 16: Learners' motivation

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
2. I think the English we learn in the lessons is useful for us to communicate with native English speakers in a real situation.	42.4	38.6	1	15.8	2
8. Since Hong Kong is part of China, I don't need English anymore because I can use Cantonese and Putonghua to communicate in my daily life.	0	7.6	3.8	55.1	27.2

Nevertheless, the findings from Statement 2, Table 16, indicate that 81% of the students still believed English they learned in their lessons was useful in a real situation. Similarly, the students overwhelmingly recognised the continued importance of English (Statement 8), with 82.3% disagreeing that Cantonese and Putonghua were enough for them and that English was a language they no longer needed in the post-1997 era. Student respondents at this school saw a need to learn English well for their future. This is a favourable factor for the implementation of TBLT in the case study school.

5.2.7 Learners' Experience

The part of the Student Questionnaire dealing with learners' experience was designed to help the students reflect on their own English learning experience. As shown in Statement 4, Table 17, the students had diverse opinions on whether a classroom task should be expected to resemble a real-world task, with 42.4% agreeing and 42.4% disagreeing.

Table 17: Learners' experience

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
4. A classroom task should not be expected to have any resemblance with the real world.	19	23.4	15.2	27.2	15.2
11. I seldom use English to communicate in my English lessons.	11.4	14.6	7	48.1	19

Although all student respondents were taught by the four selected TBLT teachers, diverse opinions were expressed with regards to their language tasks. Furthermore, 67.1% of the students disagreed with Statement 11 that they seldom used English to communicate in English lessons. This means that there must be many communicative activities carried out in the classrooms, giving them ample opportunities to use English.

5.2.8 Learning Materials

Table 18: Learning materials

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
21. Textbooks satisfy all my needs and interests in learning English at school	7.6	16.5	13.3	43.7	19

Learning materials are important in language lessons. According to Table 18, over 60% of the students disagreed with Statement 21 that their English language textbooks suited their needs and interests. If the teachers do not tailor the materials and tasks used in the lessons to their students or use additional materials or tasks if needed, it will be difficult for them to arouse their students' interest. Not doing so would also contravene

the TBLT principle that learners must be actively participating in meaningful communicative tasks.

5.2.9 Overall Attitudes

The students generally had a favourable attitude towards TBLT. They liked pair and group work activities in class rather than listening to the teachers alone, which is a pre-requisite in TBLT. Table 19 reveals to what extent students agreed or disagreed with the positive statements about TBLT in the Student Questionnaire.

Table 19: Scores for positive statements in Student Questionnaire

Positive statements	Agreement (Strongly agree & Agree) %	Disagreement (Strongly disagree & Disagree) %
1	69.6	26.6
3	49.4	43.1
6	50.0	36.8
13	48.1	46.8
17	36.7	43.7
18	35.5	57.6
Average Score %	48.22	42.43

An average 48.22% of responses agreed with the positive statements in the Student Questionnaire while an average 42.43% of responses disagreed, and just below 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. The results indicate that subjects had a range of opinions on TBLT. The results also indicate that there are two very different attitudes towards TBLT.

5.3 Lesson Observations

Although the questionnaires provided data on the attitudes of the teachers and students towards TBLT, the practice of the teachers may differ from their beliefs. In order to

investigate whether those teacher subjects who claimed to use TBLT were really practicing TBLT, I chose the method of classroom observation as one of my research methods. Only through classroom observations could I gain some knowledge of actual rather than reported behaviours of the teacher subjects.

As described in Chapter 4, four teachers from the case study school who claimed to practise TBLT were selected for classroom observation. Data were collected in four 35 minute lessons by each of these four teachers. Before the lesson observation, the teachers were asked to prepare four lessons that included their usual English language teaching activities. As I had adopted a naturalistic inquiry approach in this research, they were told to follow their usual practices in their lessons. A Lesson Observation Checklist (see Appendix 4) was used to record the occurrence of TBLT and non-TBLT features.

The checklist was adapted from *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme Part B: Communicative Features* (Spada & Frohlich, 1995:20). The checklist analyses the communicative features of verbal exchanges and activities as they occur within the lessons. According to the checklist, there are eight categories for observation (see Appendix 4 for the meaning of each category):

1. Communicative activities;
2. Non-communicative activities;
3. Error correction;
4. Students' communicative roles;
5. Students' non-communicative roles;
6. Teachers' communicative roles;
7. Teachers' non-communicative roles;

8. Grammar emphasis.

Each category has a number of sub-categories. The occurrence of each item in a sub-category was measured by counting during the lesson observation and confirmed by referring to the video-recording of the lesson. Before presenting the findings, brief descriptions of the observed lessons are given to contextualise the scenarios.

Teacher & Class A

According to the information from part one of the Teacher Questionnaire, Teacher A was a female teacher who had taught English language at secondary level for eleven years. She received her university education in Canada and her English language teacher training qualification in Hong Kong.

Class A was a secondary three class of 42 students. The students were not very motivated in their study. Whenever the lessons began, it was very noisy and Teacher A needed to spend at least five minutes in every lesson to calm down a few very noisy students and restore order in class. The class finished Tasks 3.1 to 3.3 in the unit, *Which family? Which pet?*. This is the same unit of the students' textbook in all four lessons.

Lessons 1 & 2

These lessons covered the unit, *Which family? Which pet?,* from the students' textbook. Teacher A displayed a few sentence structures on the blackboard and students were given choral drills on these sentence structures (15 mins.). After the mechanical drills, there was a chance for the students to do group work. They formed into groups of four and each group was given a task. The task was to discuss "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Having a Pet".

During group discussion time (20 mins.), many groups switched back to using Cantonese in their discussion. They gave their answers in Cantonese instead of using the pre-taught English sentence structures. Some weaker groups did not even focus on the topic assigned by Teacher A and simply chatted about topics of interest to them such as which place to go to for lunch or what online games they had played the night before. They simply ignored the structures that had just been drilled. Only two groups, comprising eight students out of the 42 in this class, used the target English sentence structures to carry out the assigned task. After 20 minutes of disorganised group discussion, Teacher A invited one representative from each of the two better groups to present to the class their respective groups' findings concerning their group mates' pets and their reasons for keeping the pets. All students kept silent throughout the peer presentation session (10 mins.). Teacher A praised these two students afterwards because they did manipulate the structures pre-taught by her. In general, these students had carried out their task successfully.

Then the class did listening Task 3.1 (10 mins.) from their textbook. Teacher A played audio-clips on a CD player and checked the answers with the whole class immediately after playing individual sections. She corrected every mistake in the students' suggested answers but she also praised them for correct answers. Then they moved on to Task 3.3, an information gap activity (15 mins.), which had the students exchange information and fill in the answers in their textbooks. The classroom became very noisy again, with most students resorting to Cantonese in carrying out their task. Only a few students sitting close to Teacher A really engaged in the task. Teacher A spent about 5 minutes to discuss the answers with the class and assigned a few pages from their English workbook as their homework.

Lessons 3 & 4

These two lessons began with a listening Task 3.2, "Pros and Cons of Modern Technology", (20 mins.) in the unit. Teacher A played audio-clips on a CD player and checked the answers with the class right after playing individual sections. A few questions required a more detailed explanation of the answers but students generally had no problem in completing the task.

Another task was an information gap activity. Students were divided into groups of four and given a topic for discussion (25 mins.). Their task was to learn their group members' opinions of the topic through question structures. The teacher adapted the topic in the textbook from "On-line Courses" to "Using ICQ". The students were very interested in the topic but seemed unable to use English in expressing themselves clearly to their friends. Most students switched back to Cantonese in their discussion. Teacher A asked the students to put down their records of discussion so that they would be ready to present their group's opinions to the class at the end of the discussion period. About half of the students were engaged in the task but the others simply chatted about their own topics in Cantonese. Those who had made notes of their discussion seemed to enjoy this task very well. Although it was very noisy in the classroom during the discussion, it was obvious that some of the more able students, though just a few, were really carrying out communicative tasks.

The extension of the discussion task was the presentation of the group's opinions in front of the class (25 mins.). Three of the brighter students were invited by Teacher A to share their record of the discussion with the class. Teacher A praised those who had done well in this task. Surprisingly, all students listened very attentively to their classmates' reports. The three students were able to use the required English sentence structures to report the opinions of their group members on using ICQ.

Teacher & Class B

According to the information from part one of the Teacher Questionnaire, Teacher B was a female teacher who had five years of English language teaching experience. She received university education as well as her English language teacher training qualification in Hong Kong.

Class B was a secondary three class of 42 students. The students were quite weak compared with those in the other three classes being observed. Unlike Teacher A, Teacher B did not require much effort in keeping classroom discipline although some students sitting at the back were not paying attention to Teacher B's instructions, instead looking out of the windows or doing their own work without the teacher noticing. The class finished Tasks 3.1 to 3.3 in the unit, *Which family? Which pet?,* and a little preparation work for the writing task. This is the same unit of the students' textbook in all four lessons.

Lessons 1 & 2

Teacher B did not practise the target sentence structures in choral drills with her students. She used more display questions to help students familiarise themselves with the required sentence structures for the subsequent discussion. She gave plenty of explanations in Chinese of the difficult English sentence structures and vocabulary items. The students then finished the task sheet for Task 3.1 (20 mins.) and filled in the blanks in some exercise books (15 mins.). Teacher B checked the work with the class by asking some students to say their answers out loud in front of the class. Weaker students who produced incorrect answers were corrected immediately by their teacher. The students seemed very used to having the lessons conducted in such a one-way,

non-interactive mode. There was little praise from Teacher B and the students who did well in answering the questions would just sit down and remain silent.

When they came to Task 3.3, an information gap activity (25 mins.), Teacher B demanded that the students exchange information and fill in the answers in their textbooks. The classroom became very noisy, with most students using Chinese rather than English to carry out their task. Teacher B asked two students to present their findings using the necessary English sentence structures but this was a failure. Teacher B was cross and spent about ten minutes on mechanical choral drills (10 mins.) of the target sentence structures. The lesson ended with some of the brighter students manipulating the sentence structures and presenting their findings in front of the class.

Lessons 3 & 4

These two lessons began with choral drills of the sentence structures from Task 3.1 in the textbook. They then did the listening Task 3.2 "Pros and Cons of Modern Technology" (20 mins.). Students were then asked to make sentences expressing their opinions on using modern technology, *e.g.* mobile phones and computers. Teacher B identified a few weak students and asked them to repeat the target language structures again and again in front of the class.

Then the class came to an information gap activity (30 mins.). Before the activity, Teacher B presented the question structure required in the task. The students were divided into groups of 4. Their task was to learn their group members' opinions on the topic "On-line Course", using the question structures they had just rehearsed. The students were very interested in the topic and were able to ask questions and respond in English. Unlike Class A, most students used the target English language structures in their discussion. The students made notes of their discussion in exercise books. The

students in Class B enjoyed this task. Although they made a lot of noise during their group discussion, this was probably a necessary condition for carrying out communicative tasks.

The students' work was not checked after the discussion task; instead, Teacher B moved on to the writing task in the same unit (20 mins.). Teacher B explained the writing topic to the class, the organisation of the essay and some vocabulary items related to the topic. The students were asked to write their draft at the end of the lesson.

Teacher & Class C

According to the information from part one of the Teacher Questionnaire, Teacher C was a male teacher who had seventeen years of English language teaching experience. He received his university education and English language teacher training qualification from a local university in Hong Kong.

Class C was a secondary three class of students. The students were among the best in the four classes. Compared with the students in the other classes, the students in Class C seemed very motivated in doing the tasks in the lessons observed. Teacher C did not need to expend any effort on gaining students' attention or on maintaining classroom discipline. In all four lessons, Teacher C used English exclusively as medium of instruction and students clearly understood the teacher very well. The class finished the Tasks 3.1 to 3.3 in the unit, *Which family? Which pet?,* and the extended writing task. This is the same unit of the students' textbook in all four lessons.

Lessons 1 & 2

Teacher C used many display questions to familiarise his students with the required sentence structures for the later listening and discussion tasks. He gave explanations of

the difficult English sentence structures and vocabulary items in simple English. The students then finished Task 3.1 in the unit, *Which family? Which pet?* (10 mins.). Teacher C checked the work with the class by inviting some students to say their answers aloud in front of the class. If an answer was wrong, Teacher C would correct it with prompting techniques. The students seemed very used to the questioning technique Teacher C employed and could usually correct their own mistakes. Teacher C praised the students who did well in answering the question and encouragements were also extended to students who had given the wrong answers.

The students then did the listening Task 3.2 "Pros and Cons of Modern Technology" (20 mins.). Students were asked to express their opinions on the "Pros and Cons of Modern Technology" before doing the listening task. When they came to Task 3.3, an information gap activity (25 mins.), Teacher C asked the students to fill the blanks in their textbooks with their personal opinions first, after which they were divided into groups of four for Task 3.3. Immediately, the classroom was filled with noise but it was noticed that most students were using English in their task.

Teacher C asked students to present their findings voluntarily and many students were eager to share their findings of their neighbours' opinions with the class. Three students were chosen to present their findings and they were able to use the necessary English sentence structures. Teacher C then moved to the writing task (15 mins.). He asked the students to discuss the writing topic in pairs, and then asked some students to present to the whole class how they would manage this writing task. At the end of the lesson, he reminded the students to write a draft of their own ideas so that they could share them with their classmates in the following lesson.

Lessons 3 & 4

As students had already finished Tasks 3.1 to 3.3 from the textbook, they had more time to spend on the writing task. Based on their existing seating arrangement, students were further divided into groups of four. They had to discuss with their group members ideas for the topic, the necessary vocabulary and sentence structures, the organisation of ideas and paragraphs and the style for writing a short essay (20 mins.). Each group had to put down their ideas on a piece of flipchart paper to be displayed on the board for later presentation to the class by a group representative. During the discussion, some students used Chinese for ease of expressing their ideas and communicating among the group. All groups managed to put down their ideas on paper for subsequent presentation.

Each group then chose a representative to present to the class (45 mins.). Most representatives were able to present their ideas in English, though in simple structures. Teacher C had praised for each group and the whole class also gave each group representative a round of applause. The whole presentation session was full of encouragement and fun. In addition to his personal feedback to each group, Teacher C also invited the other students to voice their opinions.

After the presentation, Teacher C asked the students to work on their own and finish the writing task at home (5 mins.). He told the students to finish their first draft and bring back their work for peer evaluation the following day.

Teacher & Class D

According to the information from part one of the Teacher Questionnaire, Teacher D was a male teacher who had twenty-one years of English language teaching experience. He was the most experienced English language teachers among the four teacher subjects.

He received his university education and English language teacher training qualification from a local university in Hong Kong.

Class D was a secondary three class of 34 students, the smallest class among the four classes being observed. Compared with the other three classes, the academic standard of students in Class D was also the lowest. Teacher D used two double lessons to finish Tasks 3.1 and 3.3 in the unit, *Which family? Which pet?*. This is the same unit of the students' textbook in all four lessons.

Lessons 1 & 2

Teacher D began the lesson with display questions (20 mins.). Students were given a chance to talk about their favourite pets in pairs. Some students were pleased to share their experience of keeping pets with their classmates but they seemed to have difficulties in using even very simple English to respond to the teacher's questions. Teacher D tried his best to rephrase and/or translate any problematic expressions produced by the students instead of correcting their grammatical mistakes. The students enjoyed the class open discussion, though it was not done entirely in English. Then they began the listening Task 3.1. Teacher D explained almost every question and taught the students how to speculate about possible answers in the listening material. Compared with the students in Classes A to C, the students in Class D had more time to do the listening Task 3.1 and check their answers (30 mins.). As most students were not able get the answers to the trickier questions, Teacher D replayed the parts with pauses so that the students could eventually pick the answers themselves. The lesson finished with the checking of answers in a cloze exercise from the textbook.

Lessons 3 & 4

The class proceeded to do Task 3.3, an information gap task. Before the communicative task, Teacher D displayed the questions and sentence structures on the blackboard. He asked some students to attempt questions with these sentence structures. Most students kept silent in this pre-task activity but they were generally attentive to Teacher D's explanation. There were some choral drills afterwards to familiarise students with the use of the target structures in Task 3.3 (25 mins.).

Students were then divided into pairs to tell each other the reasons for choosing or not choosing the kinds of pet specified on the task sheet in the textbook. They had to put down their partner's answer into their own textbook. A hot discussion ensued among the students about the keeping of popular pets. Some students managed to use the target language structures to do the task and most were able to share their personal experience of keeping pets at home in simple English. Teacher D mainly walked around to monitor the pair discussion task. He also assisted students who had difficulties in expressing themselves clearly in English (30 mins.).

Teacher D then held a survey of the popularity of different pets kept at home (5 mins.). Two very rare kinds of pet, a chinchilla and a snake, were kept by students in this class. Two students were invited to tell the class about their experience of keeping these two types of interesting but rare pets in Hong Kong (10 mins.). With Teacher D's assistance, these two students managed to talk about their experience in English and the class were very interested in their peers' presentation.

A narrative recount of the lessons observed made it necessary to create a focus or focuses for the analysis of these data. As the research was to investigate how TBLT was implemented in the case study school, an observation checklist which would highlight the communicative features of lessons was considered very useful for the analysis. As

mentioned above, the Lesson Observation Checklist used was adapted from the *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme: Part 2* (Spada & Frohlich, 1995:20) (see Appendix 4). The analyses of the occurrences of communicative features in each sub-category according to the observation checklist are presented in Tables 20 to 28.

5.3.1 Communicative Activities

Two categories of communicative activities were identified in the lessons, teacher-student interactions and tasks. The concept of teacher-student interaction mainly refers to the questions and answers uttered by teachers during the observation, while the term task refers to all sorts of classroom activities by students.

Verbal interactions of teachers and students

Table 20 shows that pseudo-questions were used most frequently in the lessons observed. Pseudo-requests, sometimes called 'display questions', are used to ask for information that the speaker already possesses.

Table 20: Verbal interactions of teachers and students in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Pseudo-request	42	38	52	22
Genuine request	32	35	30	20
Clarification request	6	6	15	9
Paraphrase	1	3	19	11
Translation	0	21	0	0

The teachers used more pseudo-questions in the pre-task motivation stage. All used pseudo-questions to help students express their own experiences in keeping pets or using the Internet:

Example:

Teacher A: Have you seen any pet before?

Teacher B: Have you ever used the Internet at school?

Teachers A, B and D used more pseudo-requests at the beginning than in the later part of the lessons. They used pseudo-requests to lead into the tasks and concept checking of vocabulary items at the pre-task stage. Teacher C used pseudo-questions regularly throughout the two lessons, making about 52 pseudo-requests. He used pseudo-questions primarily to elicit answers from his students from time to time to keep them on track.

Example:

Teacher C: Have you ever heard of the term 'ICQ'?

Teachers A, B and C used a similar number of genuine requests to elicit students' answers in each communicative task. Teacher D also used more genuine requests to motivate students during lessons 1 and 2 but much fewer in lessons 3 and 4. Genuine requests were also used as routine questions in classroom management, for example, Teacher B always asked her students whether they could hear and understand her instructions.

It was very interesting that all clarification requests happened at the beginning of the lessons. As most students were not able to express their meanings clearly in front of the class, teachers used such requests to clarify students' experience in keeping a pet and going online after school. Teacher C used clarification requests more often than the other three teachers, and so his students were able to give the answers clearly but he required more detailed information from the students, too.

Example:

Teacher C: How often do you feed your rabbit? How many times?

Student X: Three times.

Teacher C: Three times a day? In the morning?

Student X: One day.

Teacher C: Three times one day? What food? Three times?

Student X: Grass.....mm.....ah.....rice....

Student X had answered the question but as Teacher C had high expectations as to the detail of the answers, he used clarification requests to probe for other, unpredictable, information from the student.

Table 20 reveals another interesting point, namely that Teachers C and D used paraphrasing skills more than Teachers A and B. This was probably because Teachers C and D had confidence in their students being able to understand them if they reformulated difficult utterances. On the other hand, Teacher B would rather directly translate any difficult questions and vocabulary items into Chinese. However, the figures revealed in Table 20, reflect that Teacher A rarely paraphrased or translated her questions, and yet her students did understand her. The abilities of the students in Class A should be similar to that of those in Class B since both classes were relatively weak in English. The differences between Teacher A's teaching strategy and that of the other three teachers show her to have a stronger claim to be practising TBLT by insisting on the use of 'unrefined' English. On the other hand, Teacher B's class, though she used a lot of translation, still had difficulties understanding her questions and sometimes was simply forced to use Chinese to clarify her utterances.

Tasks

Table 21 below indicates that Classes A, B and C had the same number of communicative tasks in the lessons. They included 3 information gap activities and 2 dialogues between students in the discussion task. All the tasks were prescribed in the two units taught from the textbook and the teachers followed the tasks in the teaching materials.

Table 21: Communicative tasks in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Role-plays	0	0	0	0
Information gap activities	3	3	3	2
Problem-solving activities	0	0	0	0
Dialogues between students	2	2	2	1
Other communicative activities	0	0	0	0

Teacher D did activities fewer than prescribed in the unit. However, he spent much more time on individual tasks than Teachers A, B and C. It seemed that the students in Class D enjoyed the tasks more than the students in Classes A and B. The students in Class D had comparatively more time to prepare and do the tasks. When carrying out communicative tasks, all four classes seemed to be communicative since students had opportunities to use English meaningfully during the lessons.

5.3.2 Non-communicative Activities

Table 22 shows that Teacher A drilled her students more than the other three teachers did. She spent the first fifteen minutes of Lesson 1 to drill the sentence patterns with her students, using both individual and choral drills. Teacher B drilled her students once because the performance of her students in doing the first communicative activity was too disappointing, and so she drilled them immediately after the tasks. Teachers C and D did none of these non-communicative activities during the lessons.

Table 22: Non-communicative activities in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Individual drilling	3	0	0	0
Choral drilling	3	1	0	0
Other non-communicative activities	0	0	0	0

It is difficult to conclude that Teacher A was less communicative than Teachers B, C and D just because she did more drilling in her classes. As Classes A and B had weaker students, they might have needed more inputs at the pre-task stage, or otherwise they might not have been able to finish the tasks by themselves. Nevertheless, the students in Class B were definitely more communicative than those in Class A, at least partly shown by Teacher B doing fewer mechanical drills.

5.3.3 Error Correction

As shown in Table 23, Teachers C and D did not correct many of their students' errors. Teachers A and B corrected 28 and 30 errors of their students respectively, while Teachers C and D only corrected 3 errors in each of their classes. The majority of the errors corrected in Classes A and B were grammatical errors and the others pronunciation errors. None of the teachers corrected errors of appropriateness or intonation/stress errors.

Table 23: Error correction in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Grammatical error	17	21	3	2
Pronunciation error	11	9	0	1
Error of appropriateness	0	0	0	0
Intonation/stress error	0	0	0	0

It is interesting to note that Teachers A and C praised the students more, even when they gave ungrammatical answers. However, there are major differences between

teachers. For example, Teacher A corrected almost every error her students made while Teacher C did not.

The students in Class B were always willing to provide answers even if they were ungrammatical. Teacher B seemed impatient with their responses and was busy correcting their grammatical and pronunciation errors. Class D always kept quiet when Teacher D asked questions, with Teacher D making a great effort to push the students to respond. However, Teacher C was the most communicative because he did not correct grammatical mistakes as much as Teachers A and B did. Furthermore, Teacher C's students were more willing to respond to his questions and engage in the meaningful and communicative tasks throughout the lessons.

5.3.4 Students' Communicative Roles

As shown in Table 24, the number of occurrences of the roles of negotiator, cooperator and initiator were quite similar in the four classes.

Table 24: Students' communicative roles in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Negotiator	4	5	4	2
Cooperator	6	6	6	3
Initiator	4	4	4	2
Information giver:				
a. Predictable information	39	34	31	20
b. Unpredictable information	7	5	25	2
c. Restricted form	15	17	10	7
d. Unrestricted form	0	1	3	0

The reason for the number of occurrences of the roles of negotiator, cooperator and initiator being similar in the four classes is largely because their tasks were identical. However, there is one obvious difference between Class C and the other three classes

and that concerns the role of information giver. The reason for this difference in the number of occurrences of this role between classes was that the students in Class C gave more unpredictable answers, whereas the students in the other three classes predominantly gave predictable information.

Example:

Teacher A: What is the use of Internet nowadays?

Student Z: Study.

Teacher A: Yes. We can use the Internet service to study.

Teachers' approving attitudes did affect students' performance, encouraging them to speak freely, voicing their own views. Teacher C gave a lot of praise and thus elicited more detailed information from his students, albeit unpredictable information.

Example:

Teacher C: Why do you use the Internet?

Student Y: I can get much information from the Internet.

Teacher C: Very good. But what information?

Student Y: Study and many friends.

Teacher C: Yes … huh … information for study … How to get many friends?

Student Y: ICQ.

Teacher C: Well. ICQ… mm… how do you get friends with ICQ?

Student Y: Talk to them… every day.

Teacher C: OK, good.

Regarding the number of occurrences of unpredictable information, the lessons in Class C more closely approximated the situation expected in TBLT lessons. It is expected that a communicative class emphasising use of the target language would include rich, varied and unpredictable inputs. This helps train students to communicate

in real situations in which one has no time to prepare what to say and how to say something in advance.

5.3.5 Students' Non-communicative Roles

As shown in Table 25, students in Classes A and B had to follow their teachers' instructions more closely than the students in other two classes.

Table 25: Students' non-communicative roles in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Follower of instructions	14	15	6	8

This finding coincides with the findings reported in Table 24 that Teacher C exerted less control over his students so he could obtain more unpredictable information from his students. In fact, Teacher B used a lot of instructions mainly for classroom management such as asking students to use English, instructing students to do the tasks and distributing worksheets. These instructions, though facilitating the tasks, are not significant in the implementation of TBLT.

5.3.6 Teachers' Communicative Roles

As shown in Table 26, the number of occurrences of the roles of facilitator, organiser, guide or manager was similar in Classes A, B and C, while Class D constitutes a special case, commented on below.

Table 26: Teachers' communicative roles in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Facilitator	4	4	4	3
Organiser of resources	5	5	5	2
Resource	4	4	1	1
Guide within the classroom procedure and activities	10	11	8	6
Need analyst	0	0	0	0
Counsellor	6	6	9	6
Group process manager	4	4	4	2

Teacher C played more of a role as counsellor and less as resource than Teachers A and B. This also reflects the favourable attitudes of Teacher C towards TBLT as he did not treat himself as the provider of information to the students. Instead, he obtained information from his students and provided positive feedback and advice to his class. As a result, Class C was itself more communicative in character.

It is difficult to comment on Teacher D's performance because he did fewer tasks than the other teachers. Teacher D was more communicative than Teachers A and B because he had the same number of occurrences in the role of counsellor even though he only did two tasks, fewer than Teachers A and B. This implies that he was more willing to give advice and feedback to students and he only played the role as resource once.

5.3.7 Teachers' Non-communicative Roles

Teachers who claim to practise TBLT should score fewer counts in non-communicative roles, although the discharge of such roles is unavoidable since teachers at times must act as instructors to ensure effective classroom management and carry out other management activities.

Table 27: Teachers' non-communicative roles in observed lessons

Class	A	B	C	D
Corrector	28	30	3	5
Instructor	9	9	7	4
Knowledge giver	9	7	0	1

As shown in Table 27, Teachers A and B predominantly played the significant role of corrector. This is probably because of the poor English proficiency of their classes. They spent a lot of time correcting their students' errors, and this was undoubtedly non-communicative in terms of TBLT. Of the four teachers, only Teacher C never functioned as knowledge giver and Teacher D only once. It may therefore be concluded that Teachers A and B were more communicative in their classroom practice.

5.3.8 Grammar Emphasis

Teachers may ask form-focused questions to inspire students to give form-focused answers, or ask meaning-focused questions to inspire students to give meaning-focused answers.

Table 28: Grammar emphasis in observed lessons

	A	B	C	D
Focus on form	12	15	7	5
Focus on meaning	11	13	14	11

As shown in Table 28, Teachers A and B asked a similar number of questions focused on form and on meaning respectively, whereas Teachers C and D asked more meaning-focused questions than form-focused questions. Teachers C and D's lessons were observed with the TBLT feature of being more meaning-focussed. However, as form-focused questions are also indispensable in TBLT lessons, as pointed out in the discussion of the concept of communicative competence in Chapter 2, grammatical

competence is one of the four dimensions to develop. Nevertheless, in TBLT, the emphasis should be put on meaning rather than form so it could be argued that Teachers C and D were more on the side of TBLT without neglecting the importance of grammatical competence.

5.3.9 Overall Observation

Of the four classes observed in this study, Class C taught by Teacher C was the most communicative. Teacher C adopted a learner-centred approach in the lessons so he mainly played the roles of facilitator and counsellor. He asked the fewest number of questions focused on form. He was also inactive as corrector, instructor and knowledge-giver. His class had the largest number of occurrences of various communicative roles. Class D was also more communicative in many respects than Classes A and B.

The lessons given in Classes A and B were largely teacher-centred. Teachers' roles were mainly corrector, instructor and knowledge-giver. Teachers asked questions focusing on form rather than message, and Teacher A preferred doing choral drills while Teacher B translated much material and many questions for her students. Both classes had a larger number of occurrences of students' non-communicative roles than Classes C and D. Based on the lessons observed, I can conclude that Teachers C and D practised TBLT much better than Teachers A and B.

5.4 Interviews

Surveys and classroom observations are not enough to provide in-depth and detailed information of the teachers' personal views of TBLT and their difficulties of implementing it in their lessons. Interviews were therefore chosen to supplement the

other two research methods. As mentioned in Chapter 4 *Methodology*, a semi-structured Interview (see Appendix 5) was constructed for the personal interviews with the teachers after the lesson observations had been carried out. Conducting the interviews in such a semi-structured format aimed to provide the teachers with greater flexibility to elaborate their points of views.

The interview questions can be classified into six categories:

1. Definition of TBLT;
2. Advantages and difficulties of implementing TBLT in the lessons;
3. Error correction;
4. Roles of students;
5. Roles of teachers;
6. Grammar.

5.4.1 Definition of TBLT

Although all four teachers claimed in their questionnaires to practise TBLT, it seemed that they only partially understood the principles of TBLT. Bikram (1985) distinguished teaching 'language for communication' from teaching 'language through communication'. All four teachers defined TBLT as teaching through meaningful communicative activities. But none of them could tell whether communication should be the means and/or the goal of task-based language teaching.

Teacher A said that under no circumstances should the students dominate the language lessons. Having taught in the case study school for eleven years, she believed that learning the target language structures should be the objective of the lessons so she would devise 'communicative tasks' for the class to achieve this objective. As she said,

"In TBLT, we are still under an obligation to equip our students for examinations. We are not a play group and they (the students) must learn something in the lessons."

In addition, she believed that adequate inputs must be given to the students so that they could master the language structures required in doing the communicative tasks. She therefore insisted on doing choral drills of language structures with the class,. From the interview, she emphasised that this was the essence of TBLT in the Hong Kong context. She stressed that for Hong Kong teachers the indicator of success was their students' attainments in the public examinations. She felt obliged to make sure that her students had learnt some English structures in each lesson.

Teacher B also agreed that TBLT could increase students' participation in the lessons, and that TBLT differed from structure-based lessons, with each student having to play an active role in learning through well-prepared learning tasks. Like Teacher A, she also stressed the importance of learning language forms and vocabulary items. This is perhaps the reason for her using so much translation in her lessons, thinking that if the students did not grasp the language structures required to carry out the tasks, it would be better to revert to a more 'structural' approach so that the students would pick up the language structures more effectively. In other words, she believed that a more 'structural' approach such as the grammar-translation method was more effective than a 'communicative' approach to language teaching. Teacher B's opinions as voiced in the interview actually contradicted her own responses given in the questionnaire. From her responses, it could be deduced that she was really fond of implementing TBLT in her practice.

Teachers C and D expressed high praise for the task-based learning principle of TBLT. They believed that the most admirable point of TBLT was that students could really acquire English by active learning. Both condemned the traditional

teacher-directed language lessons. However, as I observed, only the lessons in Class C were close to what Teacher C claimed for them, with students enjoying the lesson with very good feedback from Teacher C and active discussion. However, the students in Class D were not doing their tasks with much enthusiasm, with most of them students keeping quiet throughout their lessons.

5.4.2 Advantages and Difficulties of Implementing TBLT

All four teachers claimed that there were many advantages in implementing TBLT in the classroom. They believed that TBLT increased students' exposure to English and the chances of using it in meaningful contexts. TBLT was also considered to arouse students' interest in learning English because they could get more involved with various types of learning activities rather than being passive learners.

Teacher C pointed out that TBLT could build up students' confidence in using English. He believed that students would feel the need to communicate with their peers in doing the tasks. He further explained that some students with a lower English standard would also enjoy TBLT because these students were more willing to use English to talk with their classmates than with the teacher. The students newly arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China were originally believed to have more difficulties in learning English. However, Teacher C mentioned that some new immigrant students from China were very much enjoying doing the language tasks in his lessons. It is really interesting to note that in this teacher's view the weaker students could also benefit from TBLT, a point further discussed in Chapter 6.

However, Teachers A and B also stated that there were many difficulties in adopting TBLT for those of their students with low proficiency in English. The difficulties they suggested are summarised below:

1. Students generally lacked motivation towards their studies;
2. Pair and group work activities could easily cause discipline problems;
3. Classrooms were too small for grouping the students to do learning tasks;
4. Students might be dubious about the learning result of TBLT as they were used to the explicit and direct teaching of language forms by teachers.

On the other hand, all four teachers shared similar problems in their practice of TBLT, with the set of common problems posed by them including the following:

1. There was still a lack of well-designed TBLT materials on the market and teachers needed to spend a large amount of time to prepare the learning materials for their students.
2. Parents might be suspicious of the TBLT approach. As students had to become engaged in their tasks and learn through their accomplishment, parents might complain that teachers did not 'teach' their children in the lessons.
3. It was really difficult for teachers to establish situational contexts that closely resembled those of the students' real world outside the school.
4. Their students were introverted and motivating them to speak was the major difficulty of practicing TBLT in the case study school.

5.4.3 Error Correction

All four teachers held a similar view that errors were inevitable in learning English. They argued that TBLT teachers should not correct all the errors made by the students unless they were fatal or destroyed the meaning necessary for successful communication. Teachers C and D practised what they preached in that they only

corrected a small number of errors made by their students. They said that only the mistakes that affected the meaning of the messages would be corrected by them, and did not see the need to correct every error students made in TBLT.

However, the findings from the lessons observed did not bear out the claims made by Teachers A and B as to their views. They were found to correct a large number of grammatical and pronunciation errors made by their students. Teacher A explained that the students' English standard was so poor that she just corrected serious mistakes such as "He are... they is...". Teacher B also explained that students would be more impressed if they could receive immediate feedback and correction of their errors. I found that Teacher B started contradicting herself in the interview.

5.4.4 Roles of Students

The four teachers held different views on the role of students in TBLT. Teacher A viewed the students as participants in communicative activities controlled by her, i.e. although the activities were learner-centred in nature, the lessons should be teacher-directed. She explained that a TBLT teacher should urge the students to participate in language learning tasks and ensure each student was on the right track. Her belief showed that she was quite an authoritative teacher and her style of teaching was of the teacher-dominated kind.

Teacher B also thought that too much freedom given to students would cause an adverse effect on their learning. She admitted that her lessons observed by me were not successful TBLT lessons. Although most of the time in her lessons was devoted to learner-centred activities, students did not do the tasks well and, worst of all, students used their first language, Cantonese, to talk with their friends instead of English. In her

lessons, she attempted to ask the students to practise language structures by using pair and group work discussion. Unluckily, the attempts proved futile.

Teacher C thought that students should enjoy a higher degree of autonomy over the use of language to convey their meanings and that through students' participation in the learning tasks, a better learning atmosphere could be created in the classroom. He believed that students could learn the second language more easily because they would process language structures and produce meanings rather than learn its forms by rote memorisation.

Teacher D worried that the roles of students suggested by TBLT were not applicable in his class as his students were shy and passive in their learning of English although he did try very hard to get them to speak up even in front of a small group. It was not difficult to observe in his lessons that Teacher D seemed not to have a good relationship with his students and that many students in his class did not cooperate with Teacher D's instructions. Many of them kept their mouths shut in all the lessons observed.

5.4.5 Roles of Teachers

Teachers A and B seemed to support teacher-dominated lessons as they claimed that their students would lose control easily if they worked in small groups alone for a long time. Teachers C and D proposed that a teacher should just be an initiator of the communicative tasks and become a facilitator while the students were doing the tasks.

Teacher C further mentioned that a TBLT teacher should not speak too much as this would deprive students of the chance to use English. Time should be reserved for communicative tasks done by students and the teacher should help the students in getting the tasks done successfully. Teacher D held a similar view to Teacher C but he

added that students always kept silent when the teacher joined the group activities. Teacher C suggested that the first role of a TBLT teacher should be that of a friend to the students. TBLT would definitely be much easier if the teachers could build a good relationship with the students.

5.4.6 Grammar

Grammar was the dominant focus of language teaching in previous teaching approaches, such as the grammar-translation method. TBLT also considers grammar one of the dimensions of communicative competence for students to develop in their language learning process. There is an assured place for grammar in TBLT, but not as prominent as before.

Teachers A and B held that grammar was still very important in learning English. If the students overlooked the importance of grammar, they would have great difficulties to communicate effectively, and so they thought that grammar should still be an important component in the curriculum. This perhaps explains why they corrected the students' grammatical errors more often than the other teachers. But they also stated that grammar was just the foundation of good English and the ultimate goal of English language learning was to communicate effectively in this language.

Surprisingly, Teacher C also said that grammar was essential for the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. He said that without correct grammar people could not communicate effectively with foreigners in English. He told me that most students in the case study school had learned grammar since primary one, and so he had confidence that students should be able to do the tasks without much correction of their grammar.

Teacher D held that grammar was most important in English writing so he stressed accuracy more in writing lessons. As the lessons observed were mainly on integrated listening and speaking tasks, fluency should be the key. He also thought that English teachers should teach grammar to junior form students and ensure their attainment of basic competence in English.

To summarise the data from the interviews, none of the four teachers were clear on all the principles of TBLT. None of them could tell whether communication was the means or the goal of communication. Although they shared a similar view on error correction and grammar and agreed that errors were inevitable, teachers A and B also expressed their concern that serious mistakes made by their students be corrected. They had diverse opinions of the learners' roles in TBLT. Teachers A and B could not accept that learners should be given much freedom in doing the communicative tasks. Teacher B worried that too much freedom would cause an adverse effect. Teachers C and D, on the other hand, claimed that most of the time should be devoted to learner-centred activities in TBLT. Nevertheless, they unanimously agreed that grammar played an important role in TBLT. They all held that grammar was important because it helped learners to communicate effectively. Teacher D further thought that grammar was especially important in writing. It can be concluded that the four teachers held different views of TBLT and hence followed very different practices in their lessons.

Of the four teachers, Teacher C held beliefs and practised that were closest to TBLT. Although he also stressed the importance of grammar, this did not contravene the principles of TBLT. Teachers A and D also implemented most features of TBLT in their lessons but their beliefs were more on the side of a structural approach. Teacher B's lessons focused on the teaching and learning of language structures. Although Class B were mostly doing 'tasks' throughout the observed lessons, Teacher B was only

concerned with the language structures her students could learn through these tasks. In short, both her belief and practice were far removed from the principles of TBLT.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this study entail a number of implications worth noting and discussing further. The data do not only address the research questions regarding this particular school context in Hong Kong but also bring perspectives and insights valuable to the implementation of TBLT in other contexts. The next chapter discusses the most important aspects of TBLT as seen through the prism of our findings. In addition, it discusses factors favourable to the implementation of TBLT as well as the perceived difficulties of its implementation in a holistic perspective.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study set out to investigate the attitudes of English language teachers and students from a Hong Kong secondary school towards TBLT. It also investigated the actual practice of TBLT and both the favourable factors and difficulties in its implementation in the case study school. Its findings could serve as a reflection of TBLT in Hong Kong and a reference for the implementation of TBLT in other contexts. The data collected through questionnaire surveys administered to teachers and students, lesson observations and personal interviews regarding how the English teachers at the case study school had implemented TBLT were presented in Chapter 5. This chapter discusses the results of the data collection and the implications of the findings. They include the features of the teachers' and students' attitudes towards TBLT and the various factors that contributed to the discrepancies between teachers' perception of how they had implemented TBLT and their actual practice. The factors contributing to these discrepancies, for example, the misconceptions surrounding TBLT and the poor learning motivation of the students, could therefore be correlated with the data obtained from the Student and Teacher Questionnaires, Lesson Observations and Interviews. This chapter also discusses the factors favourable to implementing TBLT at this school as well as any difficulties perceived. Lastly, the findings are summed up so that the significance and implications of the study can be further explored in the final chapter.

Since 'attitude' is an abstract construct and not easy to measure, five major areas, namely communicative activities, error correction, learners' role, teachers' role and grammar, were used as criteria for investigating the attitudes of teachers and their practice (see Section 4.4.1). These criteria were then incorporated in the research instruments: Teacher Questionnaire and Student Questionnaire. Quantitative data were

thus obtained for a more objective analysis and discussion of the teacher and student participants' attitudes towards TBLT.

The majority of the English teachers surveyed at the case study school held favourable attitudes towards the aspects of communicative activities and learners' roles in TBLT, shown by 87.5% of survey respondents agreeing / strongly agreeing with the positive statements in the Teacher Questionnaire (see Table 9). This suggests that the vast majority of respondents agreed with the theoretical framework underpinning TBLT. This result indicates that the English language teachers in the case study school generally had a favourable attitude towards TBLT. However, there were two exceptions to this finding that could be identified in the data obtained from the Teacher Questionnaire, the lesson observations and the interviews. First, the teachers still held the traditional belief that they should act as a kind of gatekeeper to catch any errors made by the students and no concessions should be granted to any grammatical mistakes. Most of the teacher respondents (90%) were still fond of doing error correction with their students (see Statement 14, Table 5). Second, grammar remained emphasised in their teaching because the English language public examinations in Hong Kong reward students with high grammatical competence. The majority of the teacher respondents (60%) disagreed with the proposition that the instruction of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning rather than form (see Statement 12, Table 8), while the majority (60%) also agreed that a grammar exercise alone can be a task (see Statement 9, Table 8). This explains why the majority of respondents disagreed with the positive statements and agreed with the negative statements in both Tables 5 and 8.

6.1 Error Correction

Judging by the data gathered through the Teacher Questionnaire, teachers seemed not in favour of the minimal error correction principle of TBLT and tended to hold a conservative view of this issue; see Table 5. The majority (90%) of the respondents agreed / strongly agreed that they should correct all errors made by their students (Statement 14, Table 5).

The observations of the lessons by the four selected teachers showed that error correction was also an important aspect of their lessons. Although these four teachers had claimed to practise TBLT often in their lessons, Teachers A and B corrected a large number of grammatical and pronunciation errors during the observations. Only Teacher C conformed more to the minimal error correction principle suggested by TBLT. In the interview, Teachers A and B even claimed that English language teachers were obliged to correct students' errors, since otherwise they might risk condemnation from students and parents. As Teachers C and D corrected fewer errors in their lessons, they were seemingly more tolerant of them. In the interview, they also claimed that a TBLT teacher should not correct every error produced by their students.

Error correction is also an interesting point to discuss in light of the students' attitudes towards TBLT. Students had a firm belief that error correction was important in learning English and that teachers should correct every error they made in the lessons (Table 12), with 92.4% of the students agreeing that the teacher should correct every grammatical error they made so that they could improve their English in future (Statement 9). This belief violated the principle of TBLT that communications success and fluency are far more important than accuracy. Students generally held a conservative view of the second language learning, thinking that accuracy was the most important thing to achieve. This was probably the result of their structure-based second language learning experience. In a traditional structure-based language teaching

approach, for example in the grammar-translation method, any mistake in language production is corrected and language forms are taught explicitly throughout the English curriculum (CDC, 1975:172). I suspected that the students' previous English learning experience was predominantly in a structural model so they had all been indoctrinated with this traditional attitude to error correction. The data from the lesson observations also showed that both Teachers A and B corrected their students' errors frequently during their lessons.

6.2 Focus on Form

Most teachers (80%) agreed that a task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication (Statement 3 in Table 6), with an overwhelming majority (90%) agreeing that learners acquired language most effectively when it was used as a vehicle for doing something else (Statement 15). However, according to both the lesson observations and the interviews, Teacher A held the view that language structures were of the utmost importance in language learning and adequate language forms had to be taught so that students could use the forms correctly in the tasks. She felt obliged to correct the errors made by her students during the lessons. She was the authority in the classroom and all students were under her control. Students should finish the tasks with the sentence structures she had taught in the lessons. Before tasks, Teacher B also spent much time on direct teaching and translation. This was to ensure her students understood the language structures and any new words. Although there was a serious discipline problem in Class B, Teacher B still insisted on finishing the pre-task grammar teaching. Teachers A and B conducted their lessons with the focus on language forms. Their performances were actually contrary to the TBLT principle according to which lessons should also have a focus on meaning.

Teacher C possessed the skills to elicit unpredictable information from his students. He successfully drove every student to participate in pair and group activities. With little explicit teaching of language structures, his students were able to finish the required tasks successfully. Teacher D also did little grammar teaching in class. He organised pair and group work activities for his students and gave them ample time to finish the tasks. Although the students in Class D were not particularly enthusiastic about doing the tasks, they were learning in accordance with the principles of TBLT.

Nevertheless, the data gathered by means of the Teacher Questionnaire indicate that all respondents were confused about the basic concepts of TBLT. On the one hand, 70% of the teachers surveyed disagreed that a task always provides linguistic output (Statement 6, Table 4). On the other hand, 60% of the teachers also disagreed that the instructions of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form (Statement 12, Table 5). The results in Table 8 show that there was a contradiction in the teachers' beliefs concerning the emphasis given to grammar in TBLT. This may be because the teachers were judged by grammatical correctness when they were students, and so the importance of grammatical correctness was deeply rooted in their minds.

6.3 Communicative Task

All the students from the four classes did pair and group work activities but the attitudes of teachers to arranging such activities different. The survey data gathered via the Teacher Questionnaire showed that 80% of respondents agreed that a task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication (Statement 3, Table 4). All teacher respondents also disagreed that learners could perform tasks well without interacting with the others (Statement 13, Table 4). The questionnaire data indicated that the teachers' beliefs on communicative tasks were in line with the principles of TBLT.

However, the data from the lesson observations and interviews show that some of the teachers appeared confused about the principle of learner-centredness in TBLT when carrying out communicative tasks in the classroom. Teachers A and B regarded such activities as just one of the teaching steps in their lessons. In the interview, they told me that students should not be given too much autonomy as they might lose track in the tasks, and so both closely supervised all the learners' activities. Although near half of Teachers A and B's lesson time was spent on activities, they regularly checked any answers with their students and asked individual students to report their progress of tasks to the whole class. The time reserved for learner-centred communicative activities was very limited. Teacher C spent half of the time letting students finish their own communicative tasks, and Teacher D spent almost two thirds of the time on learner-centred activities. It could therefore be concluded that the lessons of Teachers A and B were structure-based lessons with teacher-dominated activities rather than 'task-based' activities.

In TBLT, besides the role of knowledge giver, teachers are expected to provide opportunities for students to learn a target language in a communicative context. Moreover, they are expected to satisfy the actual communicative needs of their students. The teachers in this school had difficulties following teachers' roles as defined in TBLT because of their inconsistent attitudes towards this aspect of TBLT.

From Table 17, the findings indicate that the students did not care whether the tasks designed by teachers resembled real-life tasks. This reflects that the students undervalued the tasks they did in their previous English learning experience, and hence they did not have a strong desire for TBLT. This finding makes me feel sceptical whether the 'communicative activities' perceived by the students were really 'communicative' as suggested in TBLT. If that were so, then students should see the

resemblance between classroom tasks and real-world tasks as per Statement 4. The full picture of TBLT implementation in this school would never be revealed clearly without the analysis of the lesson observations and the interviews with teachers reported.

6.4 Learner Diversity

The banding classification system of Hong Kong secondary students (see In Chapter 3) suggests to most people that the weaker students are expected to have a poorer academic potential than their higher banding peers. Naturally, it is reasonable to expect that weaker students such as newly arrived ones from Mainland China would have difficulties in the English lessons and lack motivation to perform the language tasks.

However, this study shows that this expectation is not necessarily borne out in practice. In Class C, these students were bright, energetic and actively participating in the communicative activities. They were found to be very active in doing their English language tasks and participating in group discussions. Most of them were willing to try even though their answers might be wrong. They used very simple English to express their opinions and communicated with their classmates in English. Some really poor students in Class D also did well in the set language tasks. With ample time given for them to prepare and do the English language tasks, they strove to clarify their teacher's questions and utterances, albeit using Cantonese and then used very simple English to do the tasks.

6.5 Students' Participation

Teacher B expressed her concern in the interview that TBLT might easily cause discipline problem because there would be too many opportunities for students to do the tasks in pairs or groups. To make sure that classroom discipline would be under her

control, she would generally limit the lesson time allowed for tasks. In this situation, the weaker students might not have enough time to perform the tasks. They might have been deprived of the chance even to understand what was required of them to carry out the tasks. In addition, TBLT teachers are not knowledge givers in the lessons. They are supposed to be facilitators to guide their students learning English through tasks. Students need to interact and use their voices to communicate with each other in the tasks. Teacher B's belief and behaviours in the lessons actually suppressed the students' attempts to actively engage in the communicative tasks as suggested in the TBLT literature.

On the other hand, Teacher C motivated his students to speak up in front of the class through his excellent elicitation skills. All students in Class C, both the stronger and the weaker ones, were actively doing the communicative tasks throughout the observed lessons. Teacher D also gave ample time and opportunities for his students to complete the tasks, although the situation in Class D was totally different from Class C. The observed lessons in Class D were carried out in an atmosphere of silence, with all the students speaking ever so gently to each other during the activities. The majority talked softly and slowly to each other. The students looked sleepy and Teacher D could hardly get anyone to speak up in class. I noticed that some of the students in Class D kept silent throughout all the lessons I observed. Teacher D could only motivate a few students to answer his questions.

In addition, the students' responses might also be shaped by many factors, for example, learning style, classroom environment and learning materials. The results from the Student Questionnaires and lesson observations also show that students were not ready for TBLT as they still preferred to be the receivers of knowledge transmitted by teachers. This kind of discipline and attentiveness by students has always been rewarded

in the long history of Hong Kong school education. However, TBLT repudiates this style of learning and demands students' active participation in the lessons.

6.6 Students' Attitudes

The majority of the students had very strong motivation to learn English well. Students understood that English was still a very important language in Hong Kong and it was essential for their daily life, and possibly their future careers and further studies (Statement 8 in Table 16). This is a very important factor as learning motivation is the pre-requisite for effective language teaching and learning (Benson, 2001).

Hong Kong had been a British colony for over 150 years and English used to be the language of power, both in government administration and in major commercial corporations. Although Cantonese is the native language of 95% of the population in Hong Kong and people can usually make a living using their mother tongue, good English proficiency is highly regarded by Hong Kong students and parents as a passport to success in further studies and future careers. However, this situation changed as Putonghua gained in importance when Hong Kong's sovereignty reverted to China in 1997. Putonghua, the official spoken form of Chinese language in China, enjoys the status of power and authority in the Hong Kong Government. It has also become an essential business language for communication in the ever-thriving tourism and service industries in Hong Kong due to the frequent visits of mainlanders and the ever-increasing business contacts across the border. Nevertheless, the findings from Statement 2, Table 16, indicate that 81% of the students still believed English they learned in their lessons was useful in a real situation. Similarly, the students overwhelmingly recognised the continued importance of English (Statement 8), with 82.3% disagreeing that Cantonese and Putonghua were enough for them and that

English was a language they no longer needed in the post-1997 era. It can be concluded that student respondents at this school saw a need to learn English well for their future. This is a favourable factor for the implementation of TBLT in the case study school.

Summarising the data gathered by means of the Student Questionnaire, it can be concluded that the student subjects generally favoured the lessons being conducted in a task-based approach but they also had a strong desire to learn grammar and language structures. The majority of the students acclaimed the importance of grammar and most believed that grammatical correctness was an important criterion for good English (Statements 5, 7 and 14, Table 15). They also believed that mastery of grammar was crucial to communicate with native speakers (Statement 15, Table 15).

Students also had a firm belief that language accuracy was important in learning English, with 92.4% agreeing that the teacher should correct every grammatical error they made in their lessons so that they could improve their English in future (Statement 9 in Table 12). This belief is at odds with the principle of TBLT that communication success and language fluency are far more important than accuracy. Students generally held a conservative view of error-free language acquisition, which is probably the result of their structure-based language learning experiences where any mistake in language production would have been condemned and language forms taught explicitly throughout the English curriculum. The majority of the students (57%) also thought that language was acquired most effectively through direct or explicit teaching.

The data gathered through the Student Questionnaire showed that most students indicated a preference for pair and group activities in English lessons (see Table 13). Besides, the student subjects also admitted that they did not behave properly when doing pair or group work. In their responses to Statement 20 (Table 13), 52.5% of the subjects agreed that they tended to use their mother tongue without the teacher's

noticing during their pair and group work. The lesson observations also confirmed the students' preference for pair and group activities when doing the tasks. Pair and group work activities were organised with various degrees of success by the four teachers. Teacher C organised them very well, while Teachers A and B usually divided the students into groups yet in practice they did the tasks together as a whole class. Teacher D did least well since she did not succeed in facilitating her students' learning when dividing them into pairs or groups. Many of the students in Class D were observed to be speaking Chinese when in small groups or remained silent throughout the activity sessions.

Hong Kong students hold a long-established belief in teacher-centred education. Most students are heavily dependent on teachers' spoon-feeding in their language lessons. Without strict supervision, they would rather use their mother tongue in doing pair and group work. Students in Hong Kong generally have strong faith in explicit and direct language teaching. The data show that the students' perceptions of their own roles in language learning are largely not in favour of TBLT. I believe that the desirability of learner-centredness in English language learning will take quite a long time to establish in students' minds.

6.7 Learner Centredness

From the findings in Table 12, the students had diverse opinions on the statements and it can be concluded that the student respondents do not have a clear preference of having learner-centred language lessons. This is an unfavourable factor to the TBLT implementation in this school.

As shown in the Table 13, the findings also reflect that students were not quite ready to assume their active learning roles in TBLT. In other words, the findings

indicate that learner-centredness, one of the essential features in TBLT, is weak in the learners' conceptualisation. It is certainly an unfavourable factor of TBLT implementation in this school.

From Table 14, though not by a very large margin, the findings also indicate that students still had a preference for the teacher-centred language classroom. The contradiction found in students' responses is understandable. I am of the view that the English language teachers at this school did not always practise pair and group work activities in class, since otherwise the students' responses could be expected to be more consistent in response to the positive and negative statements with regards to their teachers' roles. They lacked experience in learning English effectively through communicative activities in class and were used to the traditional role played by their teachers.

6.8 Constraints

To sum up, the four teachers generally had a favourable attitude to TBLT. I discovered a few constraints that prevented the teachers from practising TBLT to the fullest possible extent, such as low student standards, large class size, teachers' and students' traditional beliefs in the importance of grammar and error corrections, and structure-based public examinations. Teachers A and B thought that they had to be authoritative so as to enforce classroom discipline, since otherwise no learning could take place in the classrooms. Teachers C and D clearly had the potential to implement TBLT successfully in the case study school although the introverted personalities of the students in Class D posed difficulties for Teacher D.

In spite of these constraints, Teacher C demonstrated what TBLT could be and how it could be implemented. The other teachers appeared to be making an effort to adopt

TBLT in their own classrooms but the results were not clear. At this point, I would rather consider them all as TBLT teachers with their own unique style of teaching TBLT. The four teachers were facing different problems in their classes and, most admirably, tried to change their teaching in the direction of TBLT.

The students also showed favourable attitudes towards TBLT, despite expecting grammar to be an important component of the curriculum. They clearly enjoyed the tasks they did in the lessons and carried them out well using target language structures and vocabulary. However, they also expressed their concerns at the amount of explicit and direct teaching they were getting from their teachers, considering this inadequate to pass the structure-based English language examinations. These concerns were largely the results of their mistaken understanding that TBLT does not include grammar teaching. The contrary is of course the case since developing learners' grammatical competence is one of the four basic components to be developed within the framework for communicative competence in TBLT (Canale & Swain, 1980). The students' concerns could surely be addressed with careful planning and design of the English language learning tasks.

The next chapter, the concluding chapter, summarises the research and restates the major findings and achievements of the study. It also discusses the limitations of the study and recommends directions for future research.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter concludes the thesis with the presentation of implications arising from this study, i.e. the author's conclusions, and recommendations for future research. Section 7.1 summarises the research, stating its major findings and accomplishments. Section 7.2 explores the pedagogical implications of the research. It examines and analyses the possible contributions of the research to English language teaching and curriculum planning in Hong Kong. It also suggests the factors that are making a positive contribution to the implementation of TBLT. It argues that even the weaker students could be taught effectively through TBLT and that its implementation was largely hampered by putting too much emphasis on grammar and the large class sizes typically found in Hong Kong schools. Section 7.3 states the limitations of this study. The last section, Section 7.4, suggests directions for future research into TBLT and the implications of the study. A number of minor findings of this study, though not central to its theme, are also discussed in this chapter.

7.1 Summary of Study

This study set out to investigate the attitudes of English language teachers and students towards TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. It also investigated the actual implementation of TBLT and the favourable factors and perceived difficulties in its implementation. Its findings serve as a reflection of TBLT in Hong Kong and a reference for TBLT in other contexts. Data were collected through the research methods, namely, surveys, lesson observations and personal interviews. The factors contributing to the discrepancies between the teachers' expressed attitudes and their practices could therefore be correlated with the different sources of data collected. The factors favourable to implementing TBLT at the case study school as well as difficulties

perceived were discussed. The significance of this study lies in the knowledge it adds to our understanding of how English language teachers in Hong Kong implemented TBLT, the implications of the findings regarding teachers' and students' attitudes, perception and practice of TBLT, and the contextual factors affecting a specific Hong Kong school setting.

The primary goal of the present research was to investigate the implementation of TBLT in a Hong Kong secondary school. The theoretical and contextual background of English language teaching in Hong Kong gave rise to the research topic and the questions to be addressed. The conceptual framework underpinning TBLT and the development of TBLT were explored. The literature review showed that TBLT had originally applied to syllabus design and more recent concerns were biased towards teaching methodology. Hence, the definitions and roles of the concept of 'task' needed to be examined in detail. The context of English language teaching in Hong Kong and the distinctive features of TBLT provided the rationales for designing this research and the subsequent discussion.

Teachers and students in the case study school generally had favourable attitudes towards TBLT but they also had very strong faith in the value of grammar and language accuracy. The school faced many constraints on the possible practice of TBLT, with the current structure-based public examinations dominating the method of English language teaching in classrooms being the most significant. In other words, examinations have an influential washback effect on the practice of TBLT. All teachers participating in this study regarded mastery of grammar as the primary objective of English language teaching. Similarly, the students participating in the study also stated their concern with grammatical correctness in their studies. These views reflect that success in public

examinations is still the ultimate goal of English language learning and teaching in Hong Kong.

7.2 Pedagogical Implications

English language pedagogy has changed continuously over the last few decades. The earlier belief that the teaching of grammar equals the teaching of language has not been valid since the emergence of the communicative approach to language teaching in the 1970s. TBLT is an advanced teaching methodology development within the framework of teaching communicative competence in a foreign language. It represents a paradigmatic shift from the teaching of forms to the more complex goal of developing students' communicative competence through the doing of tasks.

Nowadays TBLT is widely regarded as having met with great success. Students who study in TBLT classrooms are generally claimed to be more successful communicators than those taught by the older structure-based methods. Thus, the goal of TBLT is to help students become communicatively competent in handling a wide variety of language tasks that they will encounter in educational contexts as well as in real life. As a result of its success, there is little controversy surrounding the theoretical framework underpinning TBLT. It is also explicitly referred to in all current curriculum documents governing Hong Kong English language education. TBLT seems to be a promising approach that has been adopted by all Hong Kong English language teachers.

However, many studies in English language teaching have also found that practice may not necessarily mirror theory. Jeon and Hahn (2006), Karavas (1996) and Kennedy (1991) reported that teachers did not always practise what they preached. Undoubtedly, discrepancies between the teachers' expressed attitudes and actual classroom practices exist in any part of the world. However, I hold the belief that application know-how is

much more important than theoretical knowledge of some framework. Teachers are crucial to the success of English language teaching in Hong Kong and a major aim of this study is to address the question of how Hong Kong English language teachers perceived and practised TBLT.

This study also investigated the theories and practices of TBLT as expressed in the English language curriculum in Hong Kong. Based on recent literature and research on English language teaching, TBLT has been widely accepted as an effective way of teaching English in a second language context. In Hong Kong, the government realised the importance of TBLT and has made significant attempts to implement TBLT in schools through recent changes in the English language curriculum. The most updated version of the English language curriculum document (CDC-HKEAA, 2007) has explicitly declared TBLT its official teaching methodology. This study, in an effort to present a detailed picture of how TBLT is implemented and utilised in a Hong Kong context, discusses how theory and policy are transformed into practice. It also explores the factors that are favourable or unfavourable to the implementation of TBLT in Hong Kong.

The analysis reveals that the four teachers whose lessons were observed generally had a positive attitude towards TBLT in their practice, even though they might not have a clear grasp of the theoretical framework underpinning it. Of these four teachers, only Teacher C's teaching met all the criteria suggested by the literature for TBLT. Although the other three teachers did not entirely teach according to the TBLT framework, to a certain extent they also implemented the principles of TBLT in their lessons. For example, Teachers A and B guided their students to complete all the communicative tasks in pairs and groups, while Teacher D also adopted a learner-centred approach and spent ample time on information-gap activities.

The students also had favourable attitudes towards TBLT. The Student Questionnaire data indicate that they preferred a student-centred approach to a traditional teacher-centred classroom. They enjoyed group work activities and believed that such activities could help them communicate in English. Their performances in the lessons observed, on the whole, were satisfactory. It was also discovered that the students were generally passive and receptive to whatever the approach their teachers adopted. Even the weaker students did try to use simple English to communicate their ideas to their classmates and teachers, and sometimes they even managed to complete the communicative tasks by using very simple sentence structures. Although they expressed a preference for emphasis on grammar and error correction, such preferences could in fact be incorporated in well-designed TBLT lessons.

To sum up, four factors were identified that caused the discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions of TBLT and their actual practice of it in the case study school. Firstly, classroom management and students' motivation shaped the performances of Teachers A and B. Poor learning motivation and poor classroom discipline were the characteristics of these weaker students, as they are in most Hong Kong schools. That was the reason why Teacher A allowed her students less freedom and time in group activities. She kept the pace of teaching very fast so as to maintain her students' concentration. Teacher B also spent a lot of time yelling to keep her students quiet. From time to time, she translated difficult words and structures for her students into Chinese. She explained to me that this would guarantee their grasp of the language and ensure that her students would stay on the right track.

Secondly, both students and teachers still had faith in the traditional structural approach to language teaching. This is reflected in the data obtained through both surveys and interviews. Teachers were still keen on correcting every error made by their

students. They believed that error correction was one of their professional obligations in the classroom and no mistake was to be tolerated. This was an obvious phenomenon observed in this study as the students were generally very weak in English and made many grammatical or pronunciation errors. Students also showed their support for a structural approach in language learning. Their concepts of error correction and grammatical accuracy were quite remote from the principles favoured in TBLT. Although HKEAA had attempted in recent years to establish a balance between questions which focus on correct language forms and those which focus on meaning, the public examinations remained largely structure-based. Examination-based teaching which required a strong focus on grammatical accuracy was deep-rooted in teachers' minds. This created an influential washback effect on teaching and promoted that accuracy was the only key to success in English language teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers' and students' beliefs created a spiral effect which boosted the status of grammar in language classrooms. TBLT was therefore in a disadvantageous position in this school.

Thirdly, there were also physical constraints impeding the implementation of TBLT at the case study school. One of these was class size, ranging from 34 to 42 students in the classes observed. Naturally, it was very difficult for teachers to supervise the students' communicative tasks done in pairs or groups. However, a very large class size of over 40 students is usual in most Hong Kong classrooms. As a result, students with diverse interests, needs and abilities are placed together in one class. This creates enormous difficulties for teachers to design language tasks that were suitable for all students in the same classroom. Therefore, teachers usually rely on textbook materials and the tasks prescribed by the textbook writers. Students could only play a passive role throughout their learning process because they have no voice in formulating the

classroom learning activities or selecting tasks. There could hardly be any learner-centredness as proposed in TBLT, nor would there be any language learning autonomy fostered in such an overcrowded classroom environment.

Fourthly, the faith in grammar was a very important issue to both teachers and students. The majority of the teachers were of the view that grammar was everything in the curriculum, and that their role was to ensure that students would grasp the points of grammar effectively in their lessons. The teachers were not very sure about the role of grammar in TBLT and in effect laboured under the misapprehension that grammar and language forms were not matters of concern in TBLT. Obviously, there is a need to address this misunderstanding in any professional development courses offered the teachers.

The Education Bureau (formerly known as the Education Department or the Education and Manpower Bureau) of the Hong Kong SAR Government and the major teacher-training institutions have been aware of the need to offer additional training to English language teachers in incorporating grammar learning in TBLT. Recently, a new course commissioned by the Education Bureau, "Professional Development Course on Task-based Grammar Learning, Teaching and Assessment at Secondary Level – BWC045", was offered to all Hong Kong secondary school English teachers at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, starting November 2007 (see Appendix 13). This was an 8-week block release course for English teachers at secondary level, in other words, teachers could enjoy fully-paid leave to take this professional development course. Clearly, the Government of Hong Kong also saw the necessity to devote additional resources to developing teachers' competence in integrating grammar learning in TBLT. This initiative clearly bears out my own findings in the current study

that there is an urgent need for teachers to be trained so they can move away from traditional structure-based English language teaching to TBLT.

7.3 Limitations and Significance

This study could not possibly do justice to the range of research opportunities available concerning TBLT in the Hong Kong context, nor could this thesis cover all the elements that warrant a truly comprehensive study of the topic. It must therefore suffice for me to point out a few limitations of the current study and make some recommendations for future research.

Firstly, I conducted the research in the case study school because I was a full-time member of its teaching staff during the research period. In other words, the school was chosen by convenience sampling. Without a sound sampling process underlying the choice of the school, the applicability of the findings from this study to other school contexts is limited. This research was intended to be an in-depth case study of the implementation of TBLT at one Hong Kong school. As the case study school is mainly allocated weaker students in the annual intake (low banding students), the study cannot make a comparison of the implementation of TBLT between schools with high banding students and schools with low banding students.

Secondly, this was a case study of the implementation of TBLT in the context of a particular school in Hong Kong. The study was meant to reveal the facts regarding the implementation of TBLT in Hong Kong classrooms so the findings had to be context-specific. However, they can be regarded as a reference point for the English language curriculum development for Hong Kong schools and professional development of English language teachers in Hong Kong. There is insufficient data to argue for the transferability of the findings to other contexts at this stage.

Thirdly, according to the requirements of the Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Technology, Sydney, all research subjects have to give their full consent to participate in any human or human-related research. As a consequence, only the four teachers who indicated their practice of TBLT in the questionnaires and consented to participate in this research were selected for my detailed investigation. Others might have been better TBLT teachers than these four teacher subjects but they did not admit their practices of TBLT in filling the Teacher Questionnaires or intentionally withheld of their practice to avoid further investigation. Therefore, the implementation of TBLT as observed at the case study school might not be truly representative of the school situation.

Fourthly, the time given to lesson observations was too short to yield truly representative results. Only four lessons, of about 35 minutes each, given by these four selected English language teachers, were observed and the results obtained were not sufficient to draw firm conclusions regarding these four teachers' overall practice of TBLT. Although the teachers were reminded of the naturalistic approach adopted in this study, their classroom performances might have been unnatural due to being observed. Long-term observation, as suggested by Merriam (1998), of the teachers in different classes and at regular time intervals would have been more desirable in order to reflect reality.

Even though there are a few limitations, this study also has its significant contributions to the study of TBLT. First and foremost, it is an empirical investigation of the actual implementation of TBLT, thereby contributing to the literature in this area. The current literature has focused on TBLT either as an effective syllabus or as a set of detailed methodology principles and activities (Bygate, *et al.*, 2001; Candlin, 2001; Ellis,

2003; Johnson, 2003; Nunan, 2004, Willis & Willis, 2007). The significance of this study is, therefore, its empirical focus.

Secondly, the original contribution of this case study is its focus on the Hong Kong context, in particular, describing and critiquing the relationship between the Hong Kong curriculum framework and the perception and practice of TBLT in a local secondary school. Up till now, there is little research on TBLT implementation in Hong Kong school contexts and the current research could also form the groundwork of larger scale TBLT research to be conducted in Hong Kong.

Thirdly, this study confirms the value of TBLT in a Hong Kong context and enriches the literature by presenting an insider's perspective of TBLT. Although the findings could conclude that TBLT is well received by both teachers and students, it was also found that teacher training for TBLT was insufficient and students were not well informed of their active role in the English language teaching and learning process. In light of these findings, the effectiveness of TBLT remains a goal rather than an accomplished fact in this school.

Finally, this study is significant for the professional development and training of English language teachers as it reveals and describes the discrepancies that exist between the teachers' perceptions and practices. Some factors that contributed to such discrepancies were actually beyond the teachers' control, *e.g.*, students' learning motivation and the washback effect from public examinations, *etc*. As both students and teachers in this school expressed their preference for TBLT, this sheds light on the further studies of implementation strategies of TBLT.

7.4 Directions for Future Research

This study began with the exploration of the curriculum documents and literature to see how TBLT had originally been intended to be implemented by applied linguists and local curriculum developers. Various features of tasks and TBLT were identified in the literature and these also provided the theoretical framework for designing the research methods and the instruments, including a Teacher and Student Questionnaires, a Lesson Observation Checklist and Questions to Guide the Teacher Interviews. These instruments were used to investigate the beliefs about and attitudes towards TBLT of a sample of English teachers and their students at the case study school. Such beliefs and attitudes guided their interpretations of TBLT and their teaching and learning behaviours in classrooms. Understanding the teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes towards TBLT is crucial to the success of future English language curriculum planning considering the implementation of TBLT.

The study also confirms that classroom activities or interactions do not necessarily bring TBLT. Lai (1993) and Pennington (1995) noted the emphasis on non-interactive activities in most Hong Kong English language classrooms. However, the findings of the current study show that even a teacher-centred classroom (Class A) could practise pair and group work activities very successfully. Interactive activities could be done in both teacher-centred (Class A) and learner-centred (Class C) classrooms. This finding confirms Pennington's (1995) findings that even teacher-centred lessons could be very interactive. It also echoes with Jeon and Hahn's (2006) finding that teachers generally approved the group work basis and motivational traits of TBLT but they tended to avoid its practice in the other aspects of their lessons. The use of classroom activities in a second language classroom does not necessarily mean that TBLT underlies the teaching.

The findings further indicate that the teachers' beliefs are crucial to the practice of TBLT. The teachers participating in this study generally had a favourable attitude

towards TBLT, and features of TBLT were observed in the practice of the four teachers whose lessons were observed. Nevertheless, there were still many factors causing discrepancies between their beliefs and practices. For example, students' English proficiency levels, students' personalities, students' expectations of English language teaching and class size were beyond the control of the four teachers concerned.

It was also found that both the teachers and students participating in this study held favourable attitudes towards TBLT. However, the school was facing many constraints affecting the practice of TBLT. Structure-based public examinations were still dominating the method of English language teaching in the classrooms, which means that these examinations had a very significant washback effect on teaching. All the participating teachers regarded the mastery of grammar as the primary objective of English language teaching, and the participating students proclaimed their concern with grammatical correctness. These attitudes clearly reflect a view that success in public examinations is the proper goal of English language learning and teaching in Hong Kong. The ultimate 'task', to both teachers and students, is for students to attain grammatical competence in English.

As language teaching methodologies go, TBLT is supported by many years of practice and a superb conceptual framework. This study has provided a thought-provoking picture of TBLT in a Hong Kong school context. Based on the overall findings, three recommendations for teacher trainers, teachers and curriculum developers are proposed to round off the research.

First, this study confirms the discrepancy between the teachers' expressed attitudes towards TBLT and the practice in the classroom. This sheds light on the needs to reform the current professional development programmes for English language teachers so that quality TBLT implementation in the classroom could be assured. Teachers need more

opportunity to acquire knowledge about TBLT and also planning, implementing and assessing. To this end, it is recommended that English language teacher professional development programmes, which aim at in-depth training about language teaching methodologies, should properly deal with both the strengths and weaknesses of TBLT as an instructional method ranging from the basic principles to specific techniques, for example, integrating grammar in TBLT lessons. The recent introduction of the professional development course on integrating grammar in TBLT (see Appendix 13) coincides the findings from the current study. In addition, the sharing of good practices on TBLT implementation is also recommended as they could effectively enhance the awareness of teachers on TBLT and provide teachers with opportunities for professional reflections.

Second, the findings suggest that the focus of English language curriculum development should shift to the teachers. The curriculum policy making authority in Hong Kong, namely, Curriculum Development Council, should take in more frontline teachers' voices to develop the English language curriculum policy and documents. In addition, teachers should be given adequate guidance and assistance in understanding and interpreting the English language curriculum policy and documents through training and resource support. Schools could also establish a collaborative learning culture among teachers for professional development and support, *e.g.* peer lesson observations and co-planning of lessons. I would suggest that teachers' competence in adapting TBLT to their students' needs, including catering for a diversity of students' learning styles and the teaching of grammar still desired by students, would offer two directions for future studies.

Finally, it is believed that this study has contributed a new page on TBLT in the modern applied linguistics literature. However, large scale research into the

implementation of TBLT in Hong Kong is indispensable to provide quality English language curriculum for Hong Kong students. As TBLT is now the officially recommended approach to English language teaching for all Hong Kong schools, a territory-wide investigation pin-pointing the techniques of applying TBLT in Hong Kong classroom contexts is certainly worthwhile. The Education Bureau could also offer a platform for English language curriculum developers, teacher-trainers and teachers for sharing their professional views on English language teaching. All these measures could enhance the quality of English language education in Hong Kong schools. Having a solid theoretical foundation, TBLT should not be too vulnerable to take root in the English language teaching environment in Hong Kong.

References

Alderson, J. C. & Berreta, A. (Eds.). (1992). *Evaluating Second Language Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alexander, R. (2000). *Culture and Pedagogy: International Comparisons in Primary Education.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Allwright, D. (1997). Quality and sustainability in teacher-research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, 191-204.

Allwright, D. & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the Language Classroom: An Introduction to Classroom Research for Language Teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Allwright, R. L. (1986). Making sense of instruction: What's the problem? *Papers in Applied Linguistics (PALM)*, University of Michigan 1(2), 1-10.

Bailey, K. M. (2005). Looking Back Down the Road: A recent history of language classroom research, *Review of Applied Linguistics in China.* Vol. 1, 6-47.

Bailey, K. M. & Nunan, D. (1996). *Voices from the Language Classroom: Qualitative Research in Second Language Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bassey, M. (1999). *Case study research in educational settings.* Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

Batstone, R. (1994). *A Scheme for Teacher Education: Grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning.* London: Longman.

Bikram, K. D. (1985). Communicative Language Teaching. Selected Papers from the RELC Seminars (Singapore, 23-27 April, 1984). Anthology Series 14. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Block, D. (2002). Communicative language teaching revisited: discourses in conflict and foreign national teachers. *Language Learning Journal*, 26, 19-26.

Bogdan R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th Ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Branden, K. (2006). *Task-Based Language Education: From Theory into Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Breen, M. (1987). Learner contributions to task design. In C. Candlin & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Language Learning Tasks.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Breen, M. & Candlin, C. (1980). The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 1, 89-122.

Brennan, M. (1997). Struggles over the definition and practice of the educational doctorate in Australia. *Australian Educational Researchers*, 25, 1, 71-90.

Brindley, G. (1991). Becoming a researcher: Teacher-conducted research and professional growth. In E. Satdono (Ed.) *Language acquisition and the second/ foreign language classroom* (pp. 89-105). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Brinton, D. (2003). Content-based instruction. In D. Nunan (Ed.) *Practical English Language Teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Brown, J. D. (2002). *Doing Second Language Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brumfit, C. (1984). *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching: The Roles of Fluency and Accuracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brumfit, C. and Johnson, K. (Eds.) 1979. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burton, J. & Nunan, D. (1986). The effect of learners' theories on language learning. Applied Linguistics Association of Australia Annual Conference, Adelaide University, 24-29 August 1986.

Bygate, M., Skehan, P. & Swain, M. (Eds.) (2001). *Researching Pedagogic Tasks, Second Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*. Harlow: Longman.

Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 1, 1-47.

Candlin, C. (1987). Toward task-based learning. In C. Candlin & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Language Learning Tasks* (pp. 5-22). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Candlin, C. (2001). *English Language Teaching in its Social Context: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research. London: Falmer Press.

Carless, D. (1999). Catering for Individual Learner Differences: Primary school teachers' voices. *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4, 15-40.

CDC (Curriculum Development Committee). (1975). *Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

CDC (Curriculum Development Committee). (1983). *Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

CDC (Curriculum Development Committee). (1999a). *Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5)*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

CDC (Curriculum Development Committee). (2002a). *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 3)*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

CDC (Curriculum Development Committee). (2002b). *Basic Education Curriculum Guide*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

CDC-HKEAA (Curriculum Development Committee-Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority). (2007). *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)*. Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

Clark, C. M. & P. L. Peterson (1986). Teachers' thought processes. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. London: Macmillan.

Cook, V. (2001). *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching* (3rd Ed.). London: Arnold.

Corder, P. (1967). The Significance of Learner's Errors, *IRAL*, 5, 161-170.

Crookes, G. (1986). *Task Classification: a cross-disciplinary review*. Technical Report No. 4. Honolulu, HI: Centre for Second Language Classroom Research, Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawaii.

Crookes, G. (1998). On the relationship between second and foreign language teachers and research. *TESOL Journal*, 7(3), 6-11.

Crookes, G. & Schmidt, R. W. (1991). Motivation: reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning,* 41/4, 469-512.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-friendly Guide for Social Scientists.* London: Routledge.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal,* 78/3, 273-284.

Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Survey Article: Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching,* 31, 117-135.

Doyle, W. (1983). Academic Work. *Review of Educational Research*, 53, 159-99.

Dudley-Evans, T. & St. John, M. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

EC (Education Commission). (2005). *Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation.* Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

EMB (Education and Manpower Bureau). (2005). *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong.* Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Erickson, F. (1986). Cultural differences and science education. *Urban Review*, 18(2), 117-124.

Evans, S. (1997). Communication in the classroom: A Hong Kong perspective. In V. Berry, B. Adamson & W. Littlewood (Eds.), *Applying Linguistics: Insights into Language Education* (pp. 37-54). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Feez, S. (1998). *Text-based Syllabus Design.* NSW: NCELTR.

Foster, P. & Skehan, P. (1997). Modifying the tasks: the effects of surprise, time and planning type on task based foreign language instruction. *Thames Valley University Working Papers in English Language Teaching.* Vol. 4.

Freeman, D. (1998). *Doing Teacher Research: From inquiry to understanding.* Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Fried-Booth, D. (1986). *Project Work.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change Forces.* London: Falmer Press.

Gaies, S. J. (1980). *Classroom-centred research: Some consumer guidelines.* Paper presented at the Second Annual TESOL Summer Meeting, Albuquerque, NM, August, 1980.

Gardner, R. & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning.* Newbury: Rowley.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Glense, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* New York: Longman.

Green, P. (2002). *Slices of Life: Qualitative Research Snapshots.* Melbourne: RMIT.

Grotjahn, R. (1991). The research programme subjective theories. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,*13 (2), 187-214.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincolns (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1976). *System and Function in Language.* London: Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.

Harklau, L. (2000). From the good kids to the worst: Representations of English language learning across educational settings. *TESOL Quarterly,* 34, 35-37.

Hough, G. (2002). Going deep into an organization: Researching through a single case study. In P. Green (Ed.), *Slices of Life: Qualitative Research Snapshots* (pp.73-82). Melbourne: RMIT.

Howatt, A. (1987). From structural to communicative. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics,* Vol. 8, 14-29.

Hutchinson, T. (1991). *An Introduction to Project Work.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hymes, D. H. (1972). *On communicative competence*. In J. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Jeon I. & Hahn, J. (2006). Exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching: A case study of Korean Secondary school classroom practice. *Asian EFL Journal*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, Article 5.

Johnson, K. E. (1982). *Communicative Syllabus Design and Methodology*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Johnson, K. E. (1999). *Understanding Language Teaching: Reasoning in action*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Johnson, K. E. (2003). *Designing Language Teaching Tasks*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnston, K. E. & Swain M. (Eds.). (1997). *Immersion Education: International Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karavas, D. E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 187-196.

Kennedy, J. (1991). Perspectives on cultural and individual determinants of teaching style. *RELC Journal, 11(2),* p.61-78.

Klapper, J. (2003). Taking Communication to Task? A Critical Review to Recent Trends in Language Teaching. *Language Learning Journal*, Summer 2003, No. 27, 33-42.

Kohonen, V. (1992). Experiential language learning: Second language learning as cooperative learner education. In D. Nunan (Ed.). *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 14-39). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lai, C. (1993). *Communication failure in the language classroom: An exploration of causes. Research Report, 25.* Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

Lamb, T. (2000). Finding a voice: learner autonomy and teacher education in urban context. In B. Sinclair, I. McGrath & T. Lamb (Eds.), *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions* (pp. 118-127). London: Longman.

Leaver, B. & J. Willis (Eds.) (2005). *Task-Based Instruction in Foreign Language Education: Practices and Programs*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

LeCompte, M. D. & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research* (2nd Ed.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Lee, A., Green, B. & Brennan, M. (2000). Organisational knowledge, professional practice and the professional doctorate at Work. In Garrick, J. & C. Rhodes (Eds.) *Research and Knowledge at Work: Perspectives, Case Studies and Innovative Strategies*. London, Routledge pp. 117-136.

Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (1993). *How Language is Learned.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Littlewood, W. (1984). *Foreign and Second Language Learning: Language Acquisition Research and Its Implications for the Classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Littlewood, W. (1993). Cognitive principles underlying task-centred foreign language learning. In N. Bird, J. Harris & M. Ingham (Eds.), *Language and Content* (pp. 39-55). Hong Kong: Institute of Language in Education.

Littlewood, W. (1999). *Task-Based Learning of Grammar.* Research Paper. Hong Kong: Language Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University.

Long, M. (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* (pp. 77-99). San Diego, CA: College-Hill Press.

Long, M. & Crookes, G. (1992). Three Approaches to Task Based Syllabus Design. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 Spring, 1992, 27-55.

Loschky, L. & Bley-Vroman, R. (1993). Grammar and task-based methodology. In G. Crookes & S. Gass (Eds.), *Tasks and Language Learning: Integrating Theory and Practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Morris, P. (1996). *The Hong Kong School Curriculum.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Morris, P., Adamson, R., Au, M. L., Chan, K. K., Chan, W. Y., Ko, P. Y., Lai, A. W., Lo, M. L., Morris, E., Ng, F. P., Ng, Y. Y., Wong, W. M. & Wong, P. K. (1996). *Target Oriented Curriculum Evaluation Project: Interim Report.* Hong Kong: HKU.

Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative Syllabus Design.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1987). Communicative language teaching: Making it work. *ELT Journal*, 41, 2, 136-145.

Nunan, D. (1988). *The Learner-Centred Curriculum: A study in second language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1990). The language teacher as decision-maker: a case study. In G. Brindley (Ed.). *The Second Language Curriculum in Action* (pp. 9-35). Sydney: NCELTR.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1993). Task-based syllabus design: selecting, grading and sequencing tasks. In G. Crookes & S. M. Gass (Eds.), *Tasks in a Pedagogical Context: Integrating Theory and Practice* (pp. 58-59). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Nunan, D. (1997a). Developing standards for teacher research in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 365-367.

Nunan, D. (1997b). Research, the teacher and classrooms for tomorrow. In G. M. Jacobs (Ed.), *Language classroom of tomorrow: Issues and responses* (pp. 183-194). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Nunan, D. (2002). English as a Global Language: Counting the Cost. Featured presentation, TESOL International Convention, Salt Lake City, March 2002.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (1996). *Language Learning Motivation: Pathways to the New Century.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Parlett, M. & Hamilton, D. (1983). Evaluation in illumination. In L. Bartlett & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Naturalistic Observation* (pp. 9-26). Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Pennington, M. (1995). *Eight case studies of classroom discourse in the Hong Kong secondary English class. Research Report No. 42.* Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language.* London: Longman.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rea-Dickins, P. & Germaine, K. (1998). *Managing Evaluation and Innovation in Language Teaching: Building Bridges*. London: Longman.

Ribe, R. (1997). *The Creative Framework of Language Learning: the Third Generation of Task Prototypes.* Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.

Ribe, R. & Vidal, N. (1993). *Project Work Step by Step: Heinemann Handbooks for the English Classroom*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (1994). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, J. (1982). Recent developments in ELT. *Language Teaching*, Vol. 15, pp. 94-110.

Sarason, S. B. (1990). *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Savignon, S. (1993). Communicative language teaching: the state of the art. In S. Silberstein (Ed.), *State of the Art TESOL Essays: Celebrating 25 years of the discipline.* (pp. 35-51). Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 17-46.

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *IRAL*, 10 (3), 209-231.

Silverman, D. (1997). *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sowell, E. J. (2001). *Educational research: An integrative introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Spada, N. & Frohlich, M. (1995). *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme: Coding Conventions and Applications.* Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR).

Stake, R. (1988). Case study methods in educational research: Seeking sweet water. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.) *Complementary Methods for Research in Education* (pp. 253-300). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Van Lier, L. (1988). *The Classroom and the Language Learners: Ethnography and Second Language Classroom Research*. London: Longman.

Wen, Q. F. (2004). *Applied Linguistics Research Methods and Thesis Writing*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1987). Aspects of syllabus design. In M. Tickoo (Ed.), *Language Syllabuses: State of the Art* (pp. 87-94). Singapore: RELC.

Wilkins, D. A. (1972). *Linguistics and language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

Wilkins, D. A. (1976). *Notional Syllabuses*. London: Oxford University Press.

Wilkinson, D. & Birmingham, P. (2003). *Using Research Instruments: A Guide for Researchers*. London: Routledge .

Williams, M. & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Willis, J. & Willis, D. (2001). Task-based language learning. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, J. & Willis, D. (2007). *Doing Task-based Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wright, T. (1987). *The Roles of Teachers and Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yalden, J. (1983). *The Communicative Syllabus: Evolution, Design and Implementation.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Yin, R. K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26, 58-65.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd Ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Applications of Case Study Research* (2nd Ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

English Language Curriculum Documents for Hong Kong Schools

- CDC* Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5) (1975)
- CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5) (1983)
- CDC Syllabus for English Language (Primary 1-6) (1997)
- CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5) (1999a)
- CDC Syllabus for Use of English (Sixth Form) (1999b)
- Education Commission's Education Reform Final Report: Learning for Life, Learning through Life (2000)
- Task-based Learning and an Exemplar Module for Key Stage 3 in support of CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5) (2000)
- CDC Learning to Learn – English Language Education Consultation Document (2001)
- CDC English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 3) (2002a)
- CDC Basic Education Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2002b)
- Education Commission's Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation (2005)
- The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2005)
- CDC-HKEAA** English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6) (2007)

Note:

* CDC –Curriculum Development Committee

**HKEAA – Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Appendix 2:

Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher Questionnaire **Teacher:_____**

This questionnaire is to investigate the attitudes of Hong Kong English teachers towards Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). *Please fill in the information and circle the appropriate number below according to your own view towards the statements.* Thank you!

Part 1: ***Personal information***

1. The level of students you are teaching: S. _____

2. Class size: _____

3. Teaching experience: _____ year(s)

4. Have you ever received any English language teaching training? (if yes, please specify with dates)

_____

5. How often do you practise Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in your teaching?

Very often never

5 4 3 2 1

Part 2: ***Statements***

(Please put a tick ✓ in the appropriate box below)

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The objective of doing a task should always be clear.					
2. A task should be something measurable and correspond to the teaching objective.					
3. A task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication.					
4. A task is to help learners become competent in purposeful communication in real situations.					

5. A task seldom requires any oral and/or written communications among learners.					
6. A task always provides linguistic output.					
7. A teacher should always decide which type of tasks for use in their lessons, *e.g.* pre-task activity; structured task or communicative task.					
8. The output of a task is always predictable.					
9. A grammar exercise alone can be a task.					
10. Using authentic materials, *e.g.* radio broadcast, in the task is more desirable.					
11. A task-based language lesson should have a stated purpose of communication.					
12. The instruction of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form.					
13. Learners can perform tasks well without interacting with the others.					
14. A teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make in the task.					
15. Learners acquire language most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else.					
16. Pair or group work is often a component of task.					

------- END-------

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 3:

Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire **Student:**_____

This is a questionnaire investigating the views of Hong Kong secondary students towards Task-based language teaching (TBLT). *Please fill in the information and circle the appropriate number below according to your point of view towards the statements.* Thank you!

Part 1: ***Personal information***

1. Age: 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 or over

2. Sex: M/ F

3. Place of Birth: China / Hong Kong / other countries (please specify. _____)

4. English learning experience: _____ year(s)

Part 2: ***Statements***

Please put a tick ✓ in the appropriate box.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I think the teacher should accept any possible answers, which are relevant to a task.					
2. I think the English we learn in the lessons is useful for us to communicate with native English speakers in a real situation.					
3. I always understand the purpose of doing a task in the lesson.					
4. A classroom task should not be expected to have any resemblance with the real world.					
5. Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion for good English.					
6. I prefer pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher.					
7. My ultimate goal in learning English is to master the grammar rules.					

8. Since Hong Kong is part of China, I don't need English anymore because I can use Cantonese and Putonghua to communicate in my daily life.					
9. The teacher should correct every grammatical error I make so that I can improve my English in future.					
10. The teacher cannot fulfil the needs of every student because of the large class size.					
11. I seldom use English to communicate in my English lessons.					
12. Pair and group work waste a lot of my learning time in class.					
13. Errors are a normal part of my language learning.					
14. Accuracy in grammar is more important than fluency in using English.					
15. By mastering the rules of grammar, I am able to communicate with a native English speaker.					
16. Language is acquired most effectively through direct or explicit teaching.					
17. Pair and group work help me communicate in English.					
18. The teacher should appreciate my fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes.					
19. Pair and group work cause discipline problem in class so it should be avoided.					
20. In pair and group work activities, we tend to use the mother tongue without the teacher's noticing.					
21. Textbooks satisfy all my needs and interests in learning English at school					

-------END-------

Student Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

問卷（學生）

本問卷目的是調查香港學生對學習英語的態度.

請在以下地方填上或圈上答案

個人資料

1. 年紀: 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 或以上

2. 出生地: 中國內地 / 香港 / 其它國家（._____）

3. 英語學習經驗: _____ 年

請在以下適當方格內填上✓號

意見:	非常贊成	贊成	不肯定	不贊成	非常不贊成
1. 我認爲老師應接受任何合理相關的英語課堂活動答案					
2. 我相信在課堂內學習得到的英語，足以使我在日常生活上與外國人溝通					
3. 我經常瞭解英語課堂上進行活動的目的					
4. 英語課堂上的活動和日常生活的需要是沒有相關的					
5. 文法準確才是好英語的準則					
6. 我喜歡小組活動多於只聽老師教導					
7. 我學英語的目標是懂得使用文法					
8. ,我們不須要英語因爲我們可以用廣東話和普通話溝通					
9. 爲了改進英語,老師應該糾正我每一個文法錯誤					
10. 本班人數太多,英文老師不可能照顧每一個同學的需要					
11. 英語課堂上我甚少會用上英語與老師或同學溝通					
12. 小組活動浪費時間,會減少學習英語的時間					
13. 我學習英語時,文法上的錯誤是不可避免					
14. 文法準確比暢順的溝通重要					
15. 只要能掌握好文法,我便可以跟英國人溝通					
16. 由老師直接教授英語是最有效的學習方法					

17. 小組活動幫助我們以英語溝通					
18. 老師應欣賞我的流利英語而不應著眼於小的文法錯誤					
19. 小組活動會構成秩序文題,所以應該避免					
20. 小組活動時,我們往往在老師不留意時轉回用中文					
21. 教科書已能滿足我的須要和興趣,其它的輔助教材都不重要					

-------問卷完 -------

謝謝!

Appendix 4:

Lesson Observation Checklist

Lesson Observation Checklist

Teacher:_____, **Lesson:**_____

Lesson Observation Checklist for Task-based Language Teaching features adapted from *Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme: Part 2* (Spada and Frohlich, 1995:20).

Features	No. of Occurrences
1) Communicative Activities	
i) Questions & Answers	
a) Pseudo request	
b) Genuine request	
c) Clarified request	
d) Paraphrase	
e) Translation	
ii) Role-plays	
iii) Information gap activities	
iv) Problem-solving activities	
v) Dialogues between students	
vi) Other communicative activities	
2) Non-communicative Activities	
i) Individual drilling	
ii) Choral drilling	
iii) Other non-communicative activities	
3) Error Corrections	
i) Grammatical errors	
ii) Pronunciation errors	
iii) Errors of appropriateness	
iv) Intonation / Stress errors	
4) Learners' Communicative Roles	
i) Negotiator	
ii) Co-operator	
iii) Initiator	
iv) Information giver	
a) Predictable information	

b) Unpredictable information	
c) Restricted form	
d) Unrestricted form	
5) Students' Non-communicative Roles	
i) Follower of Instructions	
6) Teachers' Communicative Roles	
i) Facilitator	
ii) Organiser of resources	
iii) Resource	
iv) Guide within the classroom procedures and activities	
v) Needs analyst	
vi) Counsellor	
vii) Group process manager	
7) Teachers' Non-communicative Roles	
i) Corrector	
ii) Instructor ii) Knowledge Giver	
8) Grammar Emphasis	
i) Focus on form	
ii) Focus on meaning	

Notational Convention of Codes for analysis

Questions and Answers

- Pseudo Request: The student already possesses the information requested.
- Genuine Request: The information requested is not known in advance by the teacher.
- Clarification Request: Requests which indicate that the preceding utterance was not clearly understood and a repetition or reformulation is required.
- Paraphrase: Reformulation of previous utterance(s).
- Translation: Paraphrase of or explain previous utterance(s) in L1.

Communicative Activities

- Role-play: Students are assigned or nominated to have roles to act out.
- Information gap activities: Students have different sets of cues which provide different information for students and they must communicate to put their respective parts of the "jigsaw" into a composite whole.
- Problem-solving activities: This kind of activity requires students to find "solutions" to problems of different kinds.
- Dialogues between students: This activity is restricted to discussion between students, *e.g.* answering comprehension questions in pairs.

Non-Communicative Activities

- Individual Drilling: A student is requested to read a word, a phrase and / or a sentence by teachers.
- Choral Drilling: The whole class or a group of students are requested to read a word, a phrase and / or a sentence by teachers.

Error Corrections

- Grammatical Errors: Any grammatical correction of a previous utterance.
- Pronunciation Errors: Any pronunciation correction of a previous utterance.
- Errors of Appropriateness: Any correction related to the appropriateness of a previous utterance.
- Intonation / Stress Errors: Any correction related to intonation and stress of a previous utterance.

Learners' Communicative Roles

- Negotiator: Students negotiate of meanings with their classmates within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes.
- Co-operator: Students work with either students or teachers rather than do a task individually.
- Initiator: Students originate some ideas during lessons and activities.
- Information giver:
    - Predictable Information: The information given generally follows a request, is easily anticipated and is known to the teacher.
    - Unpredictable Information: The information given is not easily anticipated in that there is a wide range of information that can be provided.
    - Restricted Information: This category refers to the relatively restricted use of linguistic forms

by individual students. That is, there is an expectation imposed by the teacher, the textbook or the task that the students produce a particular form(s).

- Unrestricted Information: This category refers to relatively unrestricted use of linguistic forms. That is, there is no expectation by the teacher, textbook or task to use a particular form(s).

Students' Non-Communicative Roles

- FoHower of Instructions: Students follow what teacher said.

Teachers' Communicative Roles

- Facilitator: Teachers motivate students, arouse students' interest and help them get involved in what they are doing.
- Organiser of resource: Teachers use and / or design materials for the presentation, practice and production stages.
- Resource: Teachers themselves as resource, i.e. provide information for learners in lessons.
- Guide with the classroom procedures and activities: Teachers lead students to perform activities during lessons.
- Needs Analyst: Teachers analyse student's needs and teach what they need.
- Counsellor: Teachers give advice and feedback, offer help and clarify information for students.
- Group Process Manager: Teachers organise the classrooms as a setting for communication and communicative activities.

Teachers' Non-Communicative Roles

- Corrector: Teachers correct any kinds of errors including grammatical errors, pronunciation errors, errors of appropriateness and intonation / stress errors.
- Instructor: Teachers give instructions to students during lessons.
- Knowledge Giver: Teachers give students knowledge through their superior status.

Grammar Emphasis

- Focus of Form: Teachers ask from-focused questions to inspire students giving form-focused answers, *e.g.* tenses and agreements.
- Focus of Meaning: Teachers ask meaning-focused questions to inspire students giving message-focused answers, *e.g.* requests and invitation.

Appendix 5:

Questions to Guide the Teacher Interviews

Teacher Interview **Teacher: _____**

1. What is your overall impression of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)?

_____

2. How would you define Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)? Can you think of any similarities or differences of TBLT with other second language teaching pedagogies?

_____

3. Can you suggest some advantages of using tasks in your language teaching?

_____

4. Can you also think of any disadvantages of using tasks in your language teaching?

_____

5. What do you think about the students' errors in your teaching? Is error correction an essential part in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)?

_____

6. What kind of role do students play in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)? Do you think they are more active or more passive than in other English teaching environment?

_____

7. What do you think about your role as teacher in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)?

_____

8. What do you think about the role of grammar in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)? Are there any advantages or problems of focusing on grammar in TBLT?

_____

9. What do you think about the new curriculum reform which encourages teachers to use Project Work in teaching? Will there be any influence towards Hong Kong students learning English and the implementation of TBLT?

_____

10. Any other comments in relation to implementing TBLT?

_____

Thank you for your help!

Appendix 6:
Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Research Project: A Case Study of Task-Based Language Teaching in a Hong Kong Secondary School

Background

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) was proposed by applied linguists in the early 1980s and has now been developed as an English language teaching policy for Hong Kong schools. TBLT promotes that students can learn the language best by manipulating the language structures as the tools to accomplish the learning tasks designed by teachers. TBLT aims to develop the students' English language proficiency to cope with their future language needs.

From the view of many pedagogues in Hong Kong, TBLT is a preferred and latest English language teaching pedagogy. It is published in the English Language Syllabus for Hong Kong Schools (1999) and the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (2002) for Hong Kong schools. In theory, TBLT should be implemented in every English language classroom in Hong Kong nowadays. Thus, this has created a research space for studying TBLT's implementation in Hong Kong school contexts.

Details of Research

This research is to be conducted by Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis in a Hong Kong secondary school. This is a normal whole day school in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. The research project is titled as "A Case Study of Task-based Language teaching in a Hong Kong School Context" and it will be carried out in the school year 2005/ 2006.

Mr. LEE has been teaching English in Hong Kong for sixteen years and is currently a research student of the Doctor of Education programme at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). This research is part of Mr. Lee's Doctor of Education programme and is supervised by the UTS professors, Professor Diana Slade and Associate Professor Hermine Scheeres They have extensive experience in leading research in English Language Teaching field in Australia and worldwide.

The research set out to provide a detailed portrayal of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in a specific school context in Hong Kong. It would only involve the English teachers and students in this school. The researcher would issue questionnaires and have videotaped lesson observation and interviews with the teachers and some of their students upon obtaining their full written consents within the school premises. In addition, the data and findings of this project would not be published in any format leading to the identification of the name(s) of the school,

teachers and students and all data would be kept with the strictest security by the researcher. The research aims at investigating the implementation of TBLT in a real Hong Kong school context so that its findings serve as an accurate reflection to the English language curriculum developers, teacher-trainers and teachers to further improve English language teaching in Hong Kong.

Contact

If you would like to know more about this project, you can contact the researcher at [redacted] or email address KamCheung.F.Lee@uts.edu.au and/ or the research supervisor, Professor Diana SLADE at (61) 295143856 or email address Diana.Slade@uts.edu.au .

LEE Kam Cheung, Francis

Note:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 02 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

澳洲悉尼科技大學

課業爲本英語教學法:香港個案探討

李淦章

研究簡介

背景

「課業爲本英語教學法」於八十年代末期由語言學家提出，並自此發展成現行香港中小學英語教學政策。此教學法主要是針對學童使用英語作爲溝通工具，在課堂及學習上，以英語完成老師設計及安排之一系列學習課業，從中學會使用英語處理日常生活需要。

從語言心理學角度來看，此教學法遠較傳統着重文法教授教學法或聽講學習法優勝。惟香港課程發展署於一九九九年推出之＜中學英語教學範圍＞及二ＯＯ二年頒佈之＜英語科課程綱要＞才落實此教學法在全香港的中小學英語課實施。故此教學法在現實學校環境施行上，有着極大探討及研究之空間。

研究概述

此項研究由李淦章先生於二〇〇五・／二〇〇六學年在香港一所中學進行，研究項目名爲『課業爲本英語教學法- 香港個案探討』。李先生是中學資深英語教師，此項研究是他在澳洲悉尼科技大學教育博士課程之研究項目之一，並由該大學應用語言學教授戴安娜史奈博士及副教授海明史祈列博士親自督導。此項研究之目的是對「課業爲本英語教學法」在香港實行的狀況作出一個更清晰全面的探討，好讓香港英語課程發展得以進一步提昇，研究結果更能讓各地英語教育家及英語師資培訓人員更掌握此項英語教學政策在香港實施的利弊，讓香港英語教學力臻完美。

聯絡

任何人仕如欲進一步瞭解此項研究，可直接與李淦章先生（電話＊[redacted] 或網址＊KamCheung.F.Lee@student.uts.edu.au）或戴安娜史奈博士（電話＊(61) 2 9514 3856 或網址＊Diana.Slade@uts.edu.au）聯絡。

註: 此研究已獲澳洲新南威爾斯省悉尼科技大學人類研究道德委員會審批。如閣下對參予本項研究有任何投訴及懷疑，而研究人員亦不能給予協助的話，閣下可提出此計劃參考編號，經研究道德辦公室主任聯絡人類研究道德委員會（電話－02 9514 9615, 網址－Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au）。任何投訴，絕對保密，並必跟進及回覆。

Appendix 7:

Consent Form 1 – Teacher

The University of Technology, Sydney

Consent Form – Student Research

I _____(Teacher's Name)_____ agree to participate in the research project, "A Case Study of Task-based Language Teaching in a Hong Kong Secondary School", being conducted by Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis of the University of Technology, Sydney for his Doctor of Education programme.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to provide a detailed portrayal of task-based language teaching in a real Hong Kong school context so as to provide the reflection to the English language curriculum developer, pedagogues and teacher trainers and teachers on this official English language teaching pedagogy. It aims to study the attitudes of students and teachers towards task-based language teaching and to determine the favourable and unfavourable factors for its implementation.

I understand that my participation in this research will only involve **filling in a questionnaire** which would cost me about 30 minutes.

I am aware that I can contact Mr. LEE Kam Cheung Francis or his supervisor, Professor Diana Slade, if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (participant)

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (researcher)

Note:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 02 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 8:

Consent Form 2 – Teacher

The University of Technology, Sydney

Consent Form – Student Research

I _____(Teacher's Name)_____ agree to participate in the research project, "A Case Study of Task-based Language Teaching in a Hong Kong Secondary School", being conducted by Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis of the University of Technology, Sydney for his Doctor of Education programme.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to provide a detailed portrayal of task-based language teaching in a real Hong Kong school context so as to provide the reflection to the English language curriculum developer, pedagogues and teacher trainers and teachers on this official English language teaching pedagogy. It aims to study the attitudes of students and teachers towards task-based language teaching and to determine the favourable and unfavourable factors for its implementation.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve **videotaped lesson observation** for about four 35-minute lessons and a **follow-up interview** for about 45 minutes.

I am aware that I can contact Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis or his supervisor, Professor Diana Slade, if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (participant)

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (researcher)

Note:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 02 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 9:

Consent Form 3 – Parent and Student

The University of Technology, Sydney

Consent Form – Student Research

I agree to give my consent to Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis to involve my child to participate in the research project, "A Case Study of Task-based Language Teaching in a Hong Kong Secondary School". I understand that Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis is a full time English teacher of XXX XXX Government Secondary School and he is going to conduct this research for his Doctor of Education Programme with the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in Australia.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to provide a detailed portrayal of task-based language teaching in a real Hong Kong school context so as to provide the reflection to the English language curriculum developer, pedagogues and teacher trainers and teachers on this official English language teaching pedagogy. It aims to study the attitudes of students and teachers towards task-based language teaching and to determine the favourable and unfavourable factors for its implementation. I also understand that the participation of my child in this research will involve videotaped lesson observation for about four 35-minute English lessons and filling in a questionnaire.

I am aware that I can contact Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis or his supervisor, Professor Diana Slade, if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my child from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Mr. LEE Kam Cheung, Francis has answered all my questions fully and clearly. Also I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (Parent)

_____ ____/____/____

Signature (Student)

Note:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: 02 9514 9615, Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

澳洲悉尼科技大學

學術研究同意書

本人同意小兒參予由李淦章先生於 XX 官立中學進行，名爲『**課業爲本英語教學法香港個案探討**」之學術研究。本人知悉李先生是 XX 官立中學英語科資深教師，此項研究是他在澳洲悉尼科技大學教育博士課程之研究項目之一。

本人明白此項研究之目的是對課業爲本英語教學法在香港實行的狀況作出一個更清晰全面的探討，好讓香港英語課程發展得以進一步提昇，研究結果更能讓各地英語教育家及英語師資培訓人員更掌握此項英語教學政策在香港的實施利弊，讓香港英語教學力臻完美。

本人樂意讓小兒參予此研究計劃的課堂觀察及填寫有關問卷。本人如對小兒之參予有任何疑問，可直接與李先生或其研究導師戴安娜史奈教授諮詢。本人亦瞭解小兒參予此學術研究純屬自願性質，本人及小兒有權在不提任何原因及免負任何責任下退出此項研究計劃。

本人認同李先生已清楚交待此研究之內容，並知曉將來發表此研究報告時，不會披露小兒作爲被研究對象之身份。

此署本人同意小兒參予此計劃

_____ ____/____/____

家長簽署

此署本人同意參予此計劃

_____ ____/____/____

學生簽署（中_____班）

註:

此研究已獲澳洲新南威爾斯省悉尼科技大學人類研究道德委員會審批。如閣下對參予本項研究有任何投訴及懷疑，而研究人員亦不能給予協助的話，閣下可提出此計劃參考編號，經研究道德辦公室主任聯絡人類研究道德委員會（電話－02 9514 9615, 網址－Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au）。任何投訴，絕對保密，並必跟進及回覆。

Appendix 10:

Letter of Approval by School Principal

XX 官立中學
XXXXXXXX Government Secondary School

Address: XX, XXXX Road, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon. 地址:黃大仙 XXXX 道 XX 號	Tel(電話): 232342XX Fax(傳真): 232022XX	Website(網 址): http://www.xxxx.edu.hk E-mail(電 子 郵 箱): xxxx@emb.gov.hk

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: 12th April, 2005

Research Project of Mr. LEE Kam-cheung, Francis

This is to certify that Mr. LEE Kam-cheung, Francis of the University of Technology, Sydney has my approval to conduct his research project, "***A Case Study of Task-based Language Teaching in a Hong Kong Secondary School***", in my school for his Doctor of Education programme with immediate effect up to 31st December, 2006.

Mr. LEE has my approval to issue questionnaires and have videotaped lesson observations and interviews with the English teachers and students upon obtaining their written consents within the school premises of XXXX XXXX Government Secondary School. The use of the findings from the questionnaires and tape scripts are limited to the scope and purposes of this project stated in the invitation letter. In addition, the data and findings of this project should not be published in any format leading to the identification of the names of our school, teachers and students.

This approval is also subject to the condition that I can contact Mr. LEE Kam-cheung, Francis and his supervisor, Professor Diana SLADE if the school authorities have any concerns about the research. This approval may be withdrawn at any time without recourse to any procedures and any reasons being given.

(SIGNED)_____

Mr. XX XXXX XXX

Principal,

Appendix 11:

Teacher Questionnaire – Part 2 (Results)

Teacher Questionnaire – Part 2 (Results)

Statements	Strongly agree *No. / %*	Agree *No. / %*	Uncertain *No. / %*	Disagree *No. / %*	Strongly disagree *No. / %*
1. The objective of doing a task should always be clear.	4/40	6/60	0/0	0/0	0/0
2. A task should be something measurable and correspond to the teaching objective.	3/30	5/50	1/10	1/10	0/0
3. A task should be an activity solely carried out by learners through communication.	2/20	6/60	2/20	0/0	0/0
4. A task is to help learners become competent in purposeful communication in real situations.	7/70	3/30	0/0	0/0	0/0
5. A task seldom requires any oral and/or written communications among learners.	0/0	1/10	1/10	6/60	2/20
6. A task always provides linguistic output.	1/10	1/10	1/10	6/60	1/10
7. A teacher should always decide which type of tasks for use in their lessons, *e.g.* pre-task activity; structured task or communicative task.	2/20	6/60	0/0	1/10	1/10
8. The output of a task is always predictable.	0/0	1/10	1/10	7/70	1/10
9. A grammar exercise alone can be a task.	1/10	5/50	1/10	2/20	1/10
10. Using authentic materials, *e.g.* radio broadcast, in the task is more desirable.	3/30	6/60	1/10	0/0	0/0
11. A task-based language lesson should have a stated purpose of communication.	3/30	7/70	0/0	0/0	0/0
12. The instruction of a task-based lesson should focus on meaning more than form.	1/10	3/30	0/0	4/40	2/20
13. Learners can perform tasks well without interacting with the others.	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/20	8/80
14. A teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make in the task.	3/30	6/60	0/0	1/10	0/0
15. Learners acquire language most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else.	3/30	6/60	1/10	0/0	0/0

16. Pair or group work is often a component of task.	3/30	7/70	0/0	0/0	0/0

Appendix 12:

Student Questionnaire – Part 2 (Results)

Student Questionnaire – Part 2 (Results)

Statements	Strongly agree *No. / %*	Agree *No. / %*	Uncertain *No. / %*	Disagree *No. / %*	Strongly disagree *No. / %*
1. I think the teacher should accept any possible answers which are relevant to a task.	63/39.9	47/29.7	6/3.8	22/13.9	20/12.7
2. I think the English we learn in the lessons is useful for us to communicate with native English speakers in a real situation.	67/42.4	61/38.6	2/1	25/15.8	3/2
3. I always understand the purpose of doing a task in the lesson.	24/15.2	54/34.2	12/7.6	42/26.6	26/16.5
4. A classroom task should not be expected to have any resemblance with the real world.	30/19	37/23.4	24/15.2	43/27.2	24/15.2
5. Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion for good English.	47/29.7	49/31	16/10	46/29.1	0/0
6. I prefer pair or group work activities to listening to the teacher.	29/18.4	50/31.6	21/13.3	35/22.2	23/14.6
7. My ultimate goal in learning English is to master the grammar rules.	57/36.1	44/27.8	18/11.4	23/14.6	25/15.8
8. Since Hong Kong is part of China, I don't need English anymore because I can use Cantonese and Putonghua to communicate in my daily life.	0/0	12/7.6	6/3.8	87/55.1	43/27.2
9. The teacher should correct every grammatical error I make so that I can improve my English in future.	67/42.4	79/50	3/1.9	9/5.7	0/0
10. The teacher cannot fulfil the needs of every student because of the large class size.	35/22.2	39/24.7	22/13.9	42/26.6	20/12.7
11. I seldom use English to communicate in my English lessons.	18/11.4	23/14.6	11/7	76/48.1	30/19
12. Pair and group work waste a lot of my learning time in class.	33/20.9	31/19.6	19/12	55/34.8	20/12.7

13. Errors are a normal part of my language learning.	43/27.2	33/20.9	8/5.1	41/25.9	33/20.9
14. Accuracy in grammar is more important than fluency in using English.	31/19.6	72/45.6	9/5.7	27/17.1	19/12
15. By mastering the rules of grammar, I am able to communicate with a native English speaker.	27/17.1	56/35.4	17/10.8	36/22.8	22/13.9
16. Language is acquired most effectively through direct or explicit teaching.	21/13.3	69/43.7	13/8.2	27/17.1	28/17.7
17. Pair and group work help me communicate in English.	19/12	39/24.7	31/19.6	49/31	20/12.7
18. The teacher should appreciate my fluency in English and neglect minor grammatical mistakes.	27/17.1	29/18.4	11/7	75/47.5	16/10.1
19. Pair and group work cause discipline problem in class so it should be avoided.	41/25.9	45/28.5	17/10.8	52/32.9	3/1.9
20. In pair and group work activities, we tend to use the mother tongue without the teacher's noticing.	39/24.7	44/27.8	8/5.1	37/23.4	30/19
21. Textbooks satisfy all my needs and interests in learning English at school	12/7.6	26/16.5	21/13.3	69/43.7	30/19

Appendix 13:

Course Information: BWC045, HKIED

Professional Development Course on Task-based Grammar Learning. Teaching and Assessment at Secondary Level (BWC045), Hong Kong Institute of Education.Starting November, 2007

(Website: http://www.ied.edu.hk/acadprog/prof/prog/bwc045.htm)

Programme Code	BWC045
Mode	Full-time Block Release
Duration	5 Weeks
Venue	Tai Po Campus
Programme Co-ordinator	Dr May Pang
Programme Enquiries	2948 7371

The course aims to provide participants an opportunity to develop perceptive understanding of how to enable ESL learners to develop an ability to use English based on a broadened view of grammar. It focuses on strengthening the participants' professional knowledge and skills in grammar learning, teaching and assessment in the context of a task-based curriculum.

On completion of the course, participants will have:

1. developed a deeper understanding of the major conceptual and pedagogical issues relating to grammar learning, teaching and assessment;
2. developed competence in addressing such issues in curriculum design, as well as materials development for learning, teaching and assessment;
3. developed competence in teaching grammar in context and through discourse, in particular using language arts resources; and
4. developed confidence and competence in promoting assessment for learning.

Programme Structure

The course, which is normally offered in November each year, comprises modules in the following strands of study:

Strand 1: Developing task-based curriculum for language development

- A critical review of the main features of the English language curriculum framework

- Conceptual and pedagogical issues relating to grammar learning, teaching and assessment
- A task-based approach to curriculum development: Developing knowledge about English grammar and an ability to use the language
- Designing a task-based curriculum plan

Strand 2: Grammar teaching in task-based learning

- Teaching grammar in context and through discourse
- Principles for form-focused practice and material design
- Principles for meaning-focused practice and material design
- Using language arts resources for the ESL/EFL grammar learner

Strand 3: Assessing communicative competence in task-based learning

- Revisiting the learning, teaching and assessment cycle
- Revisiting the nature of communicative competence and defining measuring constructs operationally
- Developing assessment tasks and the related assessment criteria
- Assessment for learning: New perspective on grammar learning

Entrance Requirements

Applicants should be:

1. in-service secondary school English language teachers; and
2. recommended by school principals.

Award

To be awarded a Certificate of Completion, participants must obtain a pass in all assessment tasks required and successfully fulfil the attendance requirements as stipulated by the course.

Other Information

The Education Bureau (EDB) approves this Government-funded course. Schools which release teachers undertaking this course may apply for supply teachers. For details, please contact the relevant Regional Education Office of the EDB.

Appendix 14:

Scheme of Work

Date	Work
Year One	
March 2004 to February 2005	Four Compulsory Modules
Year Two	
March 2005 to Feb. 2006	Document Analysis and Literature Review
November 2005	UTS Human Research and Ethics Application
Year Three	
March 2006 to June 2006	Doctoral Assessment by the Faculty of Education, UTS Data Collection (1):Questionnaires to teachers and Students Data Collection (2):Lesson Observations & Data Collection (3): Individual Interviews
July 2006 to Feb. 2007	Data Analysis
Year Four	
March 2007 to July 2007	Write Up
July 2007	Submission of the First Draft
October 2007	Submission of the Second Draft
December 2007	Submission of the Final Draft
February 2008	Final Touch Up
March 2008	Thesis Submission for Examination
July 2008	Examination Completed
August 2008	Final Submission to University Graduate School for the Award of the: **Doctor of Education Degree**