

# TEACHER ASSESSMENT LITERACY IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) AT UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

NĂNG LỰC ĐÁNH GIÁ CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TRONG GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ  
DỰA TRÊN NHIỆM VỤ TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

Nguyen Quynh Anh<sup>1,\*</sup>

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.57001/huih5804.2025.044>

## ABSTRACT

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained widespread recognition as a leading teaching approach globally, prompting extensive research into various aspects of this methodology. Despite this, little research has been done to evaluate assessment in TBLT principles. To address this gap, this study seeks to examine the application of Task-Based Language Assessment (TBLA) in several Vietnamese universities, where TBLT is implemented as the main teaching methodology. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 52 teachers at these institutions, where TBLT serves as the primary teaching methodology. The findings show that teachers have a basic awareness of several key aspects of TBLA, including the use of authentic tasks, criterion-referenced assessment, and direct assessment methods. However, there are still gaps in their understanding and practices, particularly concerning the integration of language skills and the creation of reliable scoring criteria. This study highlights the need for further teacher training in TBLA to address the mismatch between teaching and testing practices, ensuring effective implementation and assessment in TBLT-focused curricula.

**Keywords:** Task-based language teaching (TBLT), task-based language assessment (TBLA), testing practice, teacher assessment literacy, teacher training.

## TÓM TẮT

Phương pháp giảng dạy ngôn ngữ theo nhiệm vụ (TBLT) đang ngày càng phổ biến trên toàn thế giới, với nhiều nghiên cứu tập trung vào các khía cạnh khác nhau của phương pháp này. Tuy nhiên, trong lĩnh vực kiểm tra, đánh giá, có rất ít nghiên cứu đi sâu vào việc áp dụng các nguyên tắc đánh giá theo nhiệm vụ (TBLA) vào thực tiễn giảng dạy. Nghiên cứu này đánh giá việc áp dụng TBLA trong giảng dạy tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam, nơi TBLT được sử dụng làm phương pháp chính. Kết quả từ bảng khảo sát 52 giáo viên cho thấy họ có hiểu biết cơ bản về TBLA, đặc biệt trong việc áp dụng các nhiệm vụ thực tế và đánh giá dựa trên tiêu chí cụ thể. Tuy nhiên, vẫn còn những hạn chế trong việc tích hợp các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ và thiết lập một tiêu chí chấm điểm đáng tin cậy. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra sự cần thiết trong việc đào tạo giáo viên về TBLA để đảm bảo việc thực hiện kiểm tra, đánh giá một cách hiệu quả.

**Từ khóa:** Giảng dạy ngôn ngữ theo nhiệm vụ, đánh giá ngôn ngữ theo nhiệm vụ, thực tiễn kiểm tra, đánh giá, đào tạo giáo viên.

<sup>1</sup>School of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

\*Email: [anhng@hauai.edu.vn](mailto:anhng@hauai.edu.vn)

Received: 10/11/2024

Revised: 13/01/2025

Accepted: 27/02/2025

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing need for English in real-life situations and specific professional contexts has driven the adoption of more communicative teaching methods. Recognizing that language education goes beyond simply teaching grammar and vocabulary, many developing Asian countries have transitioned from traditional methods like grammar-translation and Audiolingual approaches to communicative language teaching, particularly Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) [1]. Particularly, TBLT is described as a more comprehensive approach to communicative teaching, where tasks form the foundation of the entire curriculum. Developing a task-based curriculum involves selecting tasks relevant to students' needs, organizing them sequentially, and determining the specific methodological procedures for each task [2]. This student-centered approach requires

teachers to create tasks that are engaging and motivational while addressing real-world communication demands as well as academic or workplace requirements. Furthermore, TBLT aims to equip students with practical English communication skills essential for real-life use [1].

In language teaching, assessment plays a crucial role, drawing significant attention from both researchers and educators. It serves to evaluate the achievement of educational objectives and to support ongoing improvements and reforms [3]. With the growing prominence of TBLT, there has been a corresponding rise in interest in assessment practices aligned with TBLT principles, commonly referred to as Task-based Language Assessment (TBLA). Several studies have explored how task-based assessment aligns with TBLT methodologies, its positive influence on teaching practices, and the drawbacks of traditional discrete-skills assessments [4].

In Vietnam, TBLT has gained popularity and is actively promoted by the Ministry of Education as an innovative approach to language teaching [5]. Despite this, limited research has been conducted on the application of TBLA principles. Given the vital role teachers play in assessment systems, their understanding and proficiency in assessment, or assessment literacy, should be a key focus of educational development [6]. Thus, this study aims to investigate whether teachers in institutions utilizing TBLT are familiar with TBLA principles and to identify any potential mismatch between teaching methods and assessment practices.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Teacher assessment literacy

Teacher assessment literacy is the knowledge and skills educators possess regarding the design, implementation, and interpretation of assessments to enhance student learning and inform instructional practices [9]. Until now, a growing body of research suggests that many teachers receive little to no training in either theory or practice of assessment. Particularly, in pre-service teacher education, assessment is not taught well enough in various countries, and it is clear that either advanced courses or effective pedagogy on assessment are lacking [3]. In addition, [7] highlight teachers' negative feelings and attitudes toward assessment; meanwhile, [8] reveal that assessment practices among teachers are rooted in both past learning experiences and through working with and observing students.

According to [10], teachers receive limited training in TBLA, so the assessment they use at schools relies largely on their own interpretation and experience with TBLT. By definition, TBLA is the "elicitation and evaluation of language use for expressing and interpreting meaning, within a well-defined communicative context, for a clear purpose and towards a valued goal or outcome" [15]. [2] also indicates that TBLA is seen as a means to establish a strong connection between the test performance (what the test-takers perform during the test) and the real-world performance (what they can actually do in the real-world situations). Therefore, in TBLT classrooms, teachers are expected to demonstrate (1) knowledge of designing assessment tasks and (2) measuring students' tasks performance [2].

First, regarding designing the task, it is agreed that tasks within TBLA are essentially similar to tasks within TBLT [11]. A task can be defined in various ways, with one commonly recognized definition being provided by [12]. They describe a task as "an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation". Some examples of tasks might include planning a travel itinerary, writing a complaint letter about poor service, or creating an invitation for a party, among others. When designing assessment tasks, it's important to ensure that the tasks are aligned with a needs analysis. In practice, many studies and projects have developed tasks based on such analyses. For example, Hawaii's Performance Assessment Project aims to create a range of tasks that reflect real-life situations university students could encounter while learning a second or foreign language. This project covers a variety of areas, including health and recreation, travel, food and dining, work, university life, domestic activities, and even environmental or political issues.

The second key aspect of TBLA is evaluating task performance. In practice, various studies and guidelines provide methods for measuring performance, one of which is the "Guidelines for University Language Testing" (GULT) [14]. According to GULT, student performance is assessed not only based on their linguistic abilities but also on their pragmatic competence and the content they produce. This holistic approach reflects the reality that skills in real life are hardly used in isolation; instead, different skills are integrated and used in combination to complete tasks effectively. The guidelines also offer clear criteria and grids for assessing productive skills. Specifically, they suggest using existing grids such as

CLES and UNicert, or the evaluation grid created by participants at the GULT Network Meeting in Graz (2011). Some key elements in the recommended criteria or grids include: (1) task completion; (2) a focus on interaction within a communicative context; (3) tasks that are embedded in an overall context; and (4) assessing only speaking and writing skills to ensure the test remains as authentic as possible.

## 2.2. Testing culture

When implementing any new assessment methods, it is important to take into consideration the testing culture in that specific environment. Traditionally, language assessment is often linked with the discrete-point assessment that highlights rote memorisation of separate vocabulary items and grammatical points [15]. Hence, these features are usually assessed through some indirect form of assessment [16]. With indirect tests, the test does not reflect performance outside the classroom. Up until now, these traditional assessment methods are still popular in use. In contrast, aligning with TBLT makes direct assessment inevitable [17]. In direct assessment, learners are asked to demonstrate the types of communicative behaviors they will need to use in real-life situations [15]. [17] provides an example of a test where test-takers listen to a lecture and answer multiple-choice questions. While the test is performance-referenced because it involves processing a real-life lecture, it is not task-based. This is because the assessment of language performance is done indirectly, by analyzing the test-takers' responses to the multiple-choice questions, rather than through direct engagement with the task itself.

Traditional testing also adopts system-referenced tests, which require learners to show knowledge of separate linguistic aspects, such as grammatical, lexical or phonological aspects of the language [16]. It is designed to evaluate language mastery as a psychological construct without specific reference to any particular use of it. Whereas, TBLT assessment adopts performance-based items, requiring the learners to have the ability to use the language [18]. [16] also argue that TBLA is part of a larger framework to performance-based assessment. Performance assessment has three key characteristics. First, it must be based on tasks; second, the tasks should be as authentic as possible; and third, success or failure in the outcome of the task, because they are performance, must usually be rated by qualified judges. Therefore, TBLT assessment requires learners to perform a task/an activity which simulates a performance they will have to perform

outside the test situation [2]. For example, to obtain a driving licence, it is required to demonstrate their ability by actually driving, rather than simply taking a pencil and paper test [16].

In the Vietnamese university context, traditional testing often takes the form of norm-referenced approaches [19], in which tests are used largely or solely for the purposes of comparing and ranking students [20]. Norm-referenced testing is intended to disperse learners' scores along a normal distribution. With this approach, some students will do very well, many will do reasonably well, and some will perform quite poorly [16]. According to [21], this form of assessment is "appropriate for assessing abstracted language ability traits". On the other hand, [18] contends that as with TBLA, the goal is not to compare one student's abilities to those of others; rather, it is to assess whether each student can perform the target tasks at an acceptable level, in other words, to meet the established criteria. Potentially, all students might have an "A" grading, or alternatively, all might receive an "F" [16].

Another preference of traditional testing is to assess proficiency level. It is argued that the only way to gather information from students' performance is through observing or eliciting some kind of performance on the part of the learners. As a result, a general language proficiency test is given, and based on the outcomes, it is inferred that student X is at an upper-intermediate level, while student Y is at a false beginner level. According to [22], these tests do not assess general proficiency, but rather proficiency in specific contexts or situations. This is because "language varies from situation to situation, it varies according to who is using it, to whom, and about what subject... in other words, it would seem as though one cannot speak of general proficiency so much as proficiency in a language in this situation or that, in this register or that" [22]. General proficiency, then, refers to the ability to use the language in these everyday, non-specific situations. Unlike proficiency, which is not tied to any particular course of study, achievement refers to the learner's mastery of specific curricular objectives. With this, TBLA falls into the second category.

To sum up, traditional testing contradicts the characteristics of TBLA, which according to [16], include: (1) involve the direct assessment of student performance; (2) be criterion-referenced; (3) focus on the attainment of specific objectives rather than trying to assess general proficiency. [17] also outlines five features that set TBLA

apart from other types of assessment. Along with the previously mentioned characteristics, the first feature emphasizes that TBLA must use tasks as the primary tool. This means tasks play a key role in TBLA by guiding item selection, test design, and task performance evaluation. The second important feature is that TBLA is centered on meaningful and goal-oriented language use, meaning that learners need to focus on meaning to achieve the communicative goal during task performance. Finally, TBLA requires that the assessment task closely mirrors real-life, authentic performance.

### 2.3. The over-reliance on international high-stakes examinations

A new trend in testing in higher education in Vietnam, which is testing of four separate skills, including reading, listening, writing, and speaking, is another hindrance to the successful implementation of TBLA. One such testing is the IELTS test, which focuses on assessing four distinct language skills and is increasingly popular in Vietnam over the past decade, especially at tertiary level [23]. The reason behind the dominant status of the IELTS test in Vietnam are, first, as the purpose of the test itself, to increase opportunities for students to study abroad in English-speaking countries and second, adhere to the Vietnamese English Graduation Benchmark policy (National Foreign Languages Project 2020). Particularly, on a macro level, in early 2008, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) gave an official instruction, requiring universities and colleges to articulate their graduation standards, among which is English requirement. Under this policy, Vietnamese students, either English major or non-English major, are required to take an English language proficiency test such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Cambridge Preliminary Test (PET) and others, to be qualified as graduates. Among which, the IELTS test is the most preferred choice because of their recognized international credibility and wide use [24].

This use of IELTS as an exit university test may lead to washback on the academic curriculum [25]. Many universities in Vietnam have English courses simulating the IELTS format [26]. Four language skills, including reading, listening, writing and speaking are taught separately to Vietnamese university students. This raises the question whether the testing of four separate skills contrasts with TBLA, in which the testing of different skills is integrated.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire to assess university teachers' knowledge of TBLA principles.

### 3.1. Participants

The study targeted 52 English teachers from reputable universities in Hanoi, Vietnam, known for their strong foreign language programs. The universities included the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi University, Foreign Trade University, and Hanoi National University of Education. The participants were chosen based on their proficiency in English and teaching experience, representing a small group of teachers who possess strong English skills and a solid teaching background.

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

Data were gathered through an online anonymous questionnaire, distributed via Microsoft Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert-scale items, with responses ranging from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree" and "strongly agree". The teachers reviewed the principles of TBLA and then indicated their agreement or disagreement with various TBLT-appropriate and TBLA-inappropriate statements using an online questionnaire form. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed through a detailed descriptive analysis to identify which statements were considered appropriate or inappropriate for TBLA. The items on the questionnaire were based on the key principles of TBLT and TBLA discussed in the Literature Review. These principles include:

- (1) The use of authentic tasks in a specific context.
- (2) The integration of both linguistic and non-linguistic resources to achieve task goals.
- (3) The combination of different knowledge and skills when designing assessment tasks.
- (4) The direct nature of the task.
- (5) A criterion-referenced approach to assessment.
- (6) The inclusion of both task completion and language aspects in evaluating student performance.

For the first principle, which emphasizes creating tasks that reflect real-life situations, question items 1, 8, and 11 were designed. To address the second principle, which involves using a second language, items 12 and 16 were included. The third principle, concerning the integration of different skills, was covered by items 2, 3, 5, and 14. Items 9 and 10 related to the fourth principle, the

criterion-referenced and formative nature of assessment. The fifth principle, which focuses on the direct nature of tasks, was explored through items 7, 15, and 17. Finally, the sixth principle, regarding the rating scale of TBLA, was examined through question items 4, 18, 19, and 20.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study employed a version of [27]'s questionnaire, completed by a total of 52 teachers. It utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," allowing for responses to be measured on items related to teacher perceptions and practices. In the questionnaire form, some statements align with the principles of TBLA, while others contradict them. Therefore, for the items that are inconsistent with TBLA principles (items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20), the percentage of negative responses will be converted into positive responses. This data will then be presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' understanding of TBLA

No	Questionnaire Items	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)	Positive (%)
1	The best way to assess students' speaking or writing skills is that the students should be given a particular communication goal in a specific context, and they should be asked to speak or write to solve a problem within that context.	2	4.1	93.9
2	Assessment should clearly focus on each language aspect covered in class so that the teacher can identify and help students who need additional attention and guidance. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	42.9 (-53)	4.1	53 (-42.9)
3	Students' language skills such as listening, speaking, etc., should be assessed separately so that the teacher can have ideas about the students' weaknesses and strengths in each of these skills. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	30.6 (-55.1)	14.3	55.1 (-30.6)
4	In achieving a communicative goal, what is most important is conveying the message; the language accuracy (for example: grammar structure) should only matter to a certain extent. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	28.6 (-44.9)	26.5	44.9 (-28.6)

5	In assessing students' writing or speaking skills, the students should be provided with some input (reading or listening text), which they will use to solve a task problem or an information gap to achieve a communicative goal.	0	6.1	93.9
6	Students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge should be tested point by point (for example, modals) so that we can identify where the students' weaknesses are. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	49 (-44.9)	6.1	44.9 (-49)
7	A good way to assess students' speaking skills is to have them do some multiple choice tests (for example, choose the best expression in relation to a particular situation; or choose the word that have different stress patterns with other words;...) because this does not take so much time as assessing every single student and also can test students' knowledge. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	69.4 (-22.5)	8.1	22.5 (-69.4)
8	Students should be given clearly designed pedagogical tasks (for example, filling the gap in a conversation) in assessment no matter whether they are authentic tasks or not, because it is important to mark students' performance reliably. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	42.9 (-40.9)	16.2	40.9 (-42.9)
9	Tests' results should also be used to compare and rank students so that the teachers can identify the best and worst performing students. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	65.3 (-28.6)	6.1	28.6 (-65.3)
10	As long as students are assessed by clearly designed assessment tools, teachers' corrective feedback should not matter. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	53.1 (-30.6)	16.3	30.6 (-53.1)
11	The assessment tasks should be as close as possible to the tasks that the students are likely to encounter in real life or in the future workplace.	0	4.1	95.9

12	Students should be given tasks that require them to use the second language as these tasks can help them to acquire the skills needed to master real-world tasks.	4.1	4.1	91.8
13	Students should be assessed on clearly defined tasks that ask them to use particular language features so that the teacher can know whether the students have mastered these language features or not. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	24.4 (-65.4)	10.2	65.4 (-24.4)
14	If students need to understand information first, and then use it in speaking or writing, we will never know whether it is the comprehension ability or language use ability that we are assessing. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	24.4 (-47)	28.6	47 (-24.4)
15	In assessing speaking skills, students are assessed by achieving a particular goal in a particular context, and the teacher evaluates performance from the students directly, using criteria that is relevant to the target language use context.	2	4.1	93.9
16	Unless a student is required to use a certain language feature in a performance task, the teacher cannot know whether the student has acquired that language feature or not. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	32.7 (-57.1)	10.2	57.1 (-32.7)
17	In a test, a nursing student listens to an authentic dialogue between a nurse and a patient, then he/she is asked to answer multiple-choice questions based on the dialogue. If the student can understand the underlying language structures in the dialogue, it can be inferred that he/she will be able to produce these structures themselves. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	69.4 (-22.4)	8.2	22.4 (-69.4)
18	In a speaking test, if the teacher assesses students' speaking ability by evaluating the students' pronunciation, fluency,	24.5 (-63.3)	12.2	63.3 (-24.5)

	grammatical accuracy; this can give a good indication of the students' speaking ability. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)			
19	In the assessment of speaking and writing, the use of rating scales is a good idea but it is very difficult for teachers to use them reliably. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	38.8 (-46.9)	14.3	46.9 (-38.8)
20	Final exams are important exams. That is why they should include tasks on reading, grammar and vocabulary, because assessing speaking and writing cannot be done reliably and in a short amount of time in big scale exams. (inappropriate-TBLA statement)	49 (-38.8)	12.2	38.8 (-49)

#### 4.1. Authenticity of the tasks and real-world relevance

The first principle emphasizes the use of authentic tasks in a specific context, which is reflected in questionnaire items 1, 8, and 11. Regarding items 1 and 11, nearly all the teachers (over 90%) agree on the importance of using tasks that are authentic and closely related to real-life scenarios in order to address particular problems in a specific context. However, when asked to provide an opinion on an opposing statement, teachers' responses appear inconsistent. For item 8, which concerns pedagogical tasks regardless of their level of authenticity, about 40% of the teachers do not consider authenticity as a critical element in task design. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers still support the idea of designing tasks that closely resemble real-life situations and are situated in a relevant context. This indicates that teachers generally understand the TBLA principle, which stresses the creation of authentic and meaningful assessment tasks for students. However, this finding also points to a gap, that is while most teachers recognise the importance of authenticity, a minority still lean towards less authentic, more traditional types of assessment. This discrepancy might stem from practical challenges such as limited resources, large class sizes, or the logistical difficulty of designing authentic assessments. As a result, teachers may opt for more conventional tasks that are easier to implement but lack the real-world relevance emphasized by TBLA. To address this, professional development initiatives focused on the practical aspects of designing and implementing authentic tasks could help bridge the gap and support teachers in creating more meaningful assessments.

#### 4.2. Utilising both linguistic and non-linguistic repertoire

The second principle of TBLA involves using both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to achieve the task goal, as reflected in items 12 and 16. Teachers generally agree that students should use a second language to complete the task, but they are not restricted to using specific linguistic forms. Instead, students are encouraged to draw on their broader background knowledge, including their general understanding of linguistic elements, rather than just focusing on particular forms they have recently learned. This aligns with a core principle of TBLT, which prioritizes meaning and achieving communicative outcomes over mastering specific linguistic forms. In practice, teachers may focus on forms during formative assessment to help students practice what they've just learned, but this does not imply that students are limited to those forms. They are free to use their broader language skills as long as they can fulfill the task requirements. On the other hand, in summative assessment, students are generally not required to use specific language features, as the goal is to assess their overall language proficiency and knowledge acquired over time. This distinction shows that teachers understand the TBLT principle of allowing students to use a wide range of linguistic resources, rather than limiting them to specific forms.

#### 4.3. Integration of skills

The third principle of TBLA is its focus on integrative tests rather than skills-based or discrete-point tests, as reflected in items 2, 3, 5, and 14. In response to items 5 and 14, teachers agree that providing students with some background information on a topic—often in the form of vocabulary, grammar focus, or reading/listening input—is helpful. After gaining basic knowledge about the topic, students can then apply their productive skills. However, when it comes to testing, teachers generally do not favor integrative tests. In response to item 3, while half of the teachers prefer assessing students' four skills separately, only about one-third opt for integrative tests that assess multiple skills together. Additionally, nearly 50% of the teachers agree with using point-by-point tests of specific grammar features, as seen in responses to items 2 and 6. Overall, these findings indicate that more than half of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire are not familiar with the principle that TBLA should integrate various language aspects and skills. Instead, the majority of teachers appear to prefer skills-based or discrete-point tests, with only about 30% to 40% demonstrating

knowledge of TBLA's emphasis on integrative testing. The findings highlight one of the key barriers to fully implementing TBLA in Vietnam. First, traditional language teaching has long been skill-segregated, with an emphasis on grammar-focused assessments. Second, the growing reliance on international high-stakes exams at Vietnamese university level, such as the IELTS certificate, which emphasizes separate skill testing, can also reinforce a fragmented approach to language teaching. Additionally, those who might theoretically agree with TBLA's principle of integrating multiple skills in real-world tasks may lack the training or resources to design such assessments. It is also possible that teachers are concerned about the reliability and feasibility of scoring integrated tasks, especially when managing large groups of students. Transitioning from isolated skill assessments to more integrative tasks requires a shift in both mindset and resources. This shift could be encouraged through peer observation, sharing of best practices, and access to assessment tools that facilitate the combination of skills in meaningful and manageable ways.

#### 4.4. Criterion-referenced nature of the test

The fourth principle of TBLA, as reflected in the questionnaire, is the criterion-referenced and formative nature of the assessment, which corresponds to items 9 and 10. Specifically, 65.3% and 53.1% of the teachers acknowledge TBLA's principles that students' performance should be evaluated based on individual progress rather than compared to peers, and that corrective feedback is an essential aspect of the assessment process. However, about 30% of teachers believe that corrective feedback should not be a significant part of the assessment process, suggesting that a norm-referenced mindset still persists among some educators. This finding is important as it suggests despite understanding TBLA principles in theory, some teachers may still rely on more summative approaches where exams serve as final judgements rather than tools for learning growth. The reluctance to provide continuous feedback reflects a missed opportunity for formative assessment, which is essential in TBLA communicative framework. To foster a more dynamic and responsive learning environment, teachers need further exposure to formative assessment techniques and guidance on integrating these practices into task-based approaches.

#### 4.5. Direct nature of the test

The fifth principle of TBLA is its direct nature, which corresponds to items 7, 15, and 17. Nearly all teachers

(93.9%) agree with TBLA's principle of directly assessing students' abilities, as reflected in item 15. However, it is interesting to note that when the question is framed differently, such as in item 17, there seems to be a gap between what teachers know theoretically and what they practice. Specifically, 22.4% of teachers still prefer an indirect method of assessing students, such as using multiple-choice questions to infer their productive ability. Additionally, one-fifth of the teachers believe that if students can demonstrate linguistic features in exam papers, they are likely to apply them in real-life situations. Similarly, in response to item 7, 22.5% of teachers think that multiple-choice tests can effectively assess speaking skills. Therefore, while most teachers are aware of TBLA's emphasis on direct assessment, a small proportion (around one-fifth) still favor indirect testing methods.

#### 4.6. Rating scale

The final principle of TBLA relates to the rating scale, which combines task completion, linguistic components, and pragmatic/sociolinguistic/interactional aspects. This principle is addressed in items 4, 18, 19, and 20. Items 4 and 18, however, contrast with each other and are not appropriate according to TBLA principles, as they must be integrated to form a comprehensive rating scale. Overall, around 24% and 28% of teachers disagree that task completion or linguistic components alone can form a good rating scale. This indicates that only a minority (less than one-third) of teachers understand that, to accurately assess students' communicative performance, both task completion and other language components (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) must be considered. Additionally, a significant number of teachers remain unsure about what makes up a TBLA rating scale, as shown by the 26.5% and 12.2% who were neutral on items 4 and 18. Therefore, it can be concluded that two-thirds of teachers lack knowledge about constructing a TBLA test rating scale.

Another interesting point in the rating scale is the challenge teachers face in creating effective scoring criteria, as indicated by items 19 and 20. Nearly 40% of teachers acknowledge that while the TBLA rating scale is a good idea, it is difficult to create a reliable one. To avoid this challenge, about 50% of teachers prefer using reading, grammar, and vocabulary tests rather than developing a reliable rating scale for speaking and writing. This further suggests that teachers do not have a strong understanding of how to create reliable scoring criteria within the TBLA framework.

This reflects a common difficulty in TBLA: the complexity of designing effective rating criteria that capture both linguistic accuracy and task completion. Teachers may be unsure of how to balance the evaluation of language forms (grammar, vocabulary) with communicative competence (fluency, pragmatics) and task fulfilment. The lack of clear guidelines or rubrics might result in teachers reverting to traditional methods where accuracy is more easily measured. Addressing this challenge requires targeted support in designing and using holistic rating scales that capture the multifaceted nature of task performance. By providing teachers with standardized rubrics or examples of well-constructed rating scales, teacher training programs can help unravel this process and build confidence in applying TBLA principles.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the implementation of TBLA in several Vietnamese universities, aiming to examine the alignment between teaching methodologies, specifically TBLT, and testing practices. In response to the Ministry of Education's push for TBLT as an innovative teaching method, the study focused on teachers' knowledge of TBLA and their assessment practices.

The results of the study indicate that teachers possess a basic understanding of some principles of TBLA. Specifically, they are familiar with creating authentic tasks within specific contexts, encouraging students to use both linguistic and non-linguistic resources, employing criterion-referenced and formative assessments, and understanding TBLA's direct nature. However, teachers demonstrate limited knowledge in other crucial aspects of TBLA, such as integrating different language skills and creating reliable rating scales for TBLA assessments. This gap in understanding impacts their ability to fully implement TBLA principles in practice.

These findings illustrate the complex nature of educational reform in the Vietnamese context. While teachers are beginning to adopt the principles of TBLA, many remain tied to traditional methods that prioritize discrete skill testing and indirect assessment measures. To support teachers in transitioning to task-based assessment, several steps might be taken. First, professional development is essential, and it should go beyond theory to offer practical tools and sustained support, helping teachers implement TBLA in their specific contexts. This can be achieved through workshops, peer mentoring, and access to relevant assessment resources. Second, institutional support is



also crucial. Schools and government policies should closely follow TBLA principles, encouraging assessments that reflect real-world language use. Providing resources like better materials will be vital to effectively implement TBLA. Moreover, there is a need for a broader cultural shift in assessment. Moving away from norm-referenced, high-stakes exams toward formative, criterion-referenced assessments will require changes in how teachers, students, and parents perceive language learning. They need to recognize that language is not just a subject to be tested but a tool for interaction and communication, with TBLA emphasizing these aspects.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. Thomas M., Reinders H., *Contemporary task-based language teaching in Asia* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury, 2015.
- [2]. Ellis R., *Task-based language learning and teaching*. OUP, 2003.
- [3]. Al-Mahrooqi R., Coombe C., Al-Maamari F., Thakur V., *Revisiting EFL assessment: Critical perspectives*. Springer International Publishing, 2017.
- [4]. Mislevy R. J., Steinberg L. S., Almond R. G., *Design and analysis in task-based language assessment*. Language Testing, 19(4), 477–496, 2002. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0265532202lt2410a>
- [5]. MOET., *English curriculum for secondary schools* (2006); *Guide to implementation of standardized knowledge and skills: The English language subject for Vietnamese high school level* (2010). Education Publishing House.
- [6]. Fan J., Frost K., Liu B., "Teachers' involvement in high-stakes language assessment reforms: The case of Test for English Majors (TEM) in China," *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 66, 100898, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2020.100898>
- [7]. Hill M., Ell F., Evers G., "Assessment capability and student self regulation: the challenge of preparing teachers," *Front. Educ.*, 2:21, 2017. doi: 10.3389/educ.2017.00021
- [8]. Deneen C. C., Brown G. T., "The impact of conceptions of assessment-on-assessment literacy in a teacher education program," *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1225380, 2016.
- [9]. Quyen N., Khairani A., "Reviewing the challenges of implementing formative assessment in Asia: The need for a professional development program," *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 4(1), 160, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jsss.v4i1.9728>
- [10]. East M., *Task-based language teaching from the teachers' perspective: Insights from New Zealand*. John Benjamins, 2012.
- [11]. Long M. H., Norris J. M., "Task-based language teaching and assessment," in M. Byram (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language teaching*, 597–603. London: Routledge, 2020.
- [12]. Bachman L., Palmer A., *Language Testing in Practice* (p. 44). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- [13]. Faez F., Tavakoli P., *Task-based Language Teaching*. TESOL International Association, 2019.
- [14]. Fischer J., Chouissa C., Dugovicová S., Virkkunen-Fullenwider A., *Guidelines for task-based university language testing*. Graz, Austria: European Center for Modern Languages, 2011.
- [15]. Norris J. M., "Current uses for Task-based language assessment," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 36, 230–247, 2016.
- [16]. Nunan D., *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- [17]. Noroozi O., Taheri, M., "The distinguishing characteristic of task-based language assessment," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2021.
- [18]. Long M. H., *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching* (1st ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014.
- [19]. Gam L. T. H., Parry S., Hayden M., "Achieving change in student assessment policies and practices: a pressing challenge for Vietnam's higher education system," *Journal of International and Comparative Education (JICE)*, 83–96, 2018.
- [20]. Biggs J., Tang C., *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does* (3rd ed.). Berkshire: McGraw-Hill, 2007.
- [21]. Brown J. D., Hudson T., *Criterion-referenced language testing* (p. 2). Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- [22]. Ingram D., *The Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings* (pp. 10–11). (ASLPR). Adult Migrant Education Service, 1984.
- [23]. Tran T. D., *An exploratory study of current assessment practices for improving the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in two Vietnamese universities*. Doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, 2015.
- [24]. Le V. C., "English language education in Vietnamese universities: National benchmarking in practice," in E. S. Park & B. Spolsky (Eds.), *English education at the tertiary level in Asia: From theory to practice* (pp. 283–292). New York: Routledge, 2017.
- [25]. O'Loughlin K., Arkoudis S., "Investigating IELTS exit score gains in higher education," *IELTS Research Reports*, 10, 95–180, 2009.
- [26]. Bui, T. H., *Washback of the proficiency assessment as exit requirement on non-English major students at a law school*. Vietnam National University, Hanoi, 2018.
- [27]. Nguyen Q. A., *Implementation of Task-based language assessment at universities in Vietnam*. Master dissertation, University of Huddersfield, the United Kingdom, 2022.

## THÔNG TIN TÁC GIẢ

**Nguyễn Quỳnh Anh**

Trường Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch, Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội