VIETNAMESE EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS A TASK-BASED **READING COMPREHENSION CLASS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Received: 24/6/2022		Task-based language teaching has been considered one of the most	
Revised:	22/8/2022	effective approaches that allow learners to produce as much English as possible through meaningful tasks. Nevertheless, there have been very	
Published: 22/8/2022		few studies conducted on the implementation of task-based language	
KEYWORDS		teaching (TBLT) in secondary education in the Vietnamese EFL context. This paper aims to investigate secondary school students' attitudes towards the implementation of TBLT in an English reading	
Attitude		class. The participants included 33 eighth graders at a Ho Chi Minh	
English as a foreign language		City-based secondary school. The closed-ended questionnaire was	
Reading comprehension		employed to collect the quantitative data. The results revealed that the majority of students held positive attitudes towards TBLT in reading	
Secondary education		comprehension lessons. In particular, the behavioral dimension	
Task-based language teaching		obtained the highest agreement from the participants, followed by the cognitive dimension and the affective dimension. It is therefore suggested that EFL teachers should consider implementing TBLT to aid students in improving their reading comprehension.	

THÁI ĐỘ CỦA HỌC SINH VIỆT NAM ĐỐI VỚI LỚP ĐỌC HIỂU TIẾNG ANH DỰA VÀO NHIỆM VỤ TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC CƠ SỞ

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		ΤΟΜ ΤΑΤ
Ngày nhận bài: 24/6/2022 Ngày hoàn thiện: 22/8/2022		Day ngôn ngữ dựa vào nhiệm vụ được xem là một trong những phương
		pháp hiệu quả vì thông qua phương pháp này người học có nhiều cơ hội sử dụng tiếng Anh khi họ thực hiện các nhiệm vụ. Tuy nhiên,
Ngày đăng:	22/8/2022	không nhiều nghiên cứu tìm hiểu về việc áp dụng phương pháp này ở
TỪ KHÓA		bậc trung học cơ sở (THCS) tại Việt Nam. Bài viết nhằm nghiên cứu thái độ của nhóm học sinh THCS đối với việc vận dụng phương pháp dạy học dựa vào nhiệm vụ trong lớp học đọc hiểu tiếng Anh. Đối
Thái độ Tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ nước ngoài Đọc hiểu Giáo dục trung học Dạy ngôn ngữ dựa vào nhiệm vụ		tượng khảo sát bao gồm 33 học sinh lớp 8 tại một trường THCS ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Bảng khảo sát với các câu hỏi kín được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng đa số học sinh có thái độ tích cực đối với lớp đọc hiểu dựa vào nhiệm vụ. Trong đó, khía cạnh hành vi được nhận được nhiều sự đồng tình nhất của học sinh, tiếp theo là khía cạnh nhận thức và khía cạnh cảm xúc. Vì vậy, nhóm tác giả khuyến nghị giáo viên nên sử dụng phương pháp này trong các lớp đọc hiểu tiếng Anh.

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1. Introduction

English has been globally acknowledged as the most dominant language [1]; as a result, students in English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) contexts, especially in metropolitan areas, have to learn English at an early age. In Vietnam, students are required to gain knowledge of English and have certain international certificates of English proficiency. One of the biggest challenges for Vietnamese learners is learning language skills, especially reading skill. This has been an essential skill as it helps to catch up with the development of economy, science, culture, and technology. Researchers as well as educational experts have conducted many educational studies and pointed out that reading comprehension, one of the receptive elements, is genuinely important for English as a Foreign Language learners. Students can increase numerous lexical items through reading various kinds of texts. Kilian et al. [2] stated that learners have been supposed to acquire lexical items incidentally through reading comprehension. In addition, students can broaden their horizons through reading comprehension. Castillo and Bonilla [3] pointed out that reading occupies a vital role since it is interactive progress, which requires students to get access to academic texts such as history, politics, economy, education, and other areas, and then converts them into knowledge.

Not only does it foster vocabulary knowledge relevant to their favorite topics, but it also helps to empower cognitive skills. In fact, most EFL students are motivated if they read some texts related to their real-life situations. Students who have opportunities to acquire new knowledge by extensive reading and debating with partners tend to boost their intellectual growth [4].

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) was developed in the 1980s and it has been recommended by many linguistic researchers [5]-[8]. Despite having various definitions, they mainly highlighted that language instruction should pay attention to learning interaction in order to generate the most efficient use of language, and learners may achieve language successfully by completing tasks. Willis [9] gave the definition of a task as an activity having specific objectives, which are 'goal-oriented', that must be attained by using the target language. Additionally, the main focus is on understanding and delivering meanings so as to finish the tasks successfully. Learners are likely to use the target language meaningfully while conducting tasks. Ellis [10, p. 16] stated that a task is an activity that "requires learners to process language pragmatically" to get a specific result which could be assessed in terms of whether "the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed." Meanwhile, Richards, Platt, and Weber [11, p. 289] defined a task as an activity which is conducted as the consequence of "processing and understanding the language." For instance, tasks can refer to some activities such as drawing a map while listening to the audio, listening to guidance and then performing it.

Learning attitudes refer to a mental state that is manifested externally in order to acquire knowledge about a specific topic. In other words, the learning attitude is the mental condition of pupils who are actively engaged in learning. Different learning incentives motivate various individual learning motivations. Three components of attitudes are listed by [12], including affective components, behavioral components, and cognitive components. These models are also known as ABC models. The affective component of an attitude is its perception or feeling. It is the individual's emotions and sentiments that are responsible for what is occurring. For example, a student says "I'm very nervous because I have to present in front of the class", this means he feels particularly anxious when preparing to present in class. The behavioral component is how participants engage with the worldview directly. This is the behavior, often referred to as a reaction, when impacted by external factors. The cognitive component comprises attitudes-related opinions or beliefs. It refers to the aspect of a person's attitude that relates to their general knowledge. For instance, a student says "I will focus on my teacher's talk", this means he will concentrate on the lessons (reaction) when the teacher is teaching (external factor). The cognitive component is regarded as the most essential aspect of attitudes. Cognition is frequently referred to as a person's background knowledge. These are individual perceptions, attitudes, and assessments of the current

situation. Each individual has a unique level of understanding and perception of their attitude. For example, a student says "I believe that English is easy", which means he thinks that studying English is not difficult, although many other students do not have the same beliefs as him.

Numerous studies undertaken by researchers [6], [13]-[15] have investigated the use of TBLT in association with learning motivation and reading comprehension. The majority of research suggests that TBLT motivates students to learn and improves their reading comprehension. Sholeh, Salija, and Sahril [16] conducted research to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of Indonesian EFL Learners on Task-based Language Teaching. The study was done at MTsN 3 Demak school, Indonesia with the participation of 96 students. The data was gathered through a questionnaire. A quantitative analysis of the questionnaire was conducted using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study indicate that the majority of EFL Indonesian students have positive attitudes and views of TBLT, hence they like enrolling in TBLT English sessions. In this study, the authors conducted research about students' attitudes towards TBLT in reading comprehension class in terms of affective aspect, behavioral aspect, and cognitive aspect of language attitudes.

Several teaching methods/approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT), content-based instruction (CBI), or task-based language teaching (TBLT) have been introduced to L2 learners with the aim of focusing on meaningful language rather than structured one. Nevertheless, there have been very few studies conducted on the effects of TBLT on secondary students in Vietnam. In this sense, this study aims to answer the following research question.

• What are EFL students' attitudes towards the application of TBLT in a reading class at Hoang Dieu secondary school?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research sites and participants

This convergent parallel mixed-methods research was conducted at a secondary school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, i.e., both quantitative data and qualitative data were simultaneously collected at the end of the course. This school has been established for 7 years. It is one of the national standard schools with over 150 young, well-trained and enthusiastic teachers. The teaching and learning environment in this school may familiarize students with advanced teaching methodologies, which focuses on students' self-development. In the aspect of teaching English, the Grammar-Translation Method has been used for many years at this school; therefore, employing the TBLT approach may bring a particular effect on students' reading achievement.

During the 17-week English course, all of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) were instructed within four 45-minute periods every week, i.e., reading skills were taught in one period a week. The reading session was involved in the three stages of the TBLT approach including pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. At the stage of pre-task, students were exposed to photographs, pre-reading comprehension questions or words and phrases relevant to the reading lesson. During this stage, grammar forms and new lexical items that is crucial for comprehension and task completion were highlighted. After receiving clear instructions on how to accomplish the task, students collaboratively work in groups or pairs to organize, negotiate, and carry out the task. At this stage, the instructor was a mentor to provide support and encouragement to individuals, pairs, and groups. After finishing the task, students reported on their task process and present their task outcomes. At the last stage – language focus, the teacher casted light on target language aspects in the texts so that the students fully comprehended and improved them.

The participants of the study were 33 grade-8 students at Hoang Dieu Secondary school who were conveniently selected as one of the authors is the teacher of English at this school. These students took part in a task-based reading session. Some reading texts in the textbook were used to find out whether students' reading ability would improve when they were exposed to TBLT. They were at the age of 13 to 14.

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No.	Personal inf	Information –	F	%	
1	Condon	Male	14	42.42	
	Gender	Female	19	57.58	
2	•	A	13	26	78.79
	Age	14	7	21.21	

2.2. Research instrument

A closed-ended questionnaire was employed in this study. This study's questionnaire was adapted from a number of sources [17]-[20]. The questionnaire aims to investigate the students' attitudes toward the TBLT instructed in reading class. There were three parts in the questionnaire: behavioral aspect (8 items), cognitive aspect (8 items) and affective aspect (8 items) of language attitudes. The questionnaire was designed based on a five-point Likert scale, including 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The five-point scale was computed using the following interval range: 1.00-1.80: Strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60: Disagree, 2.61-3.40: Neutral, 3.41-4.20: Agree, 4.21-5.00: Strongly agree.

The construct validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a field expert to guarantee its trustworthiness, i.e., whether the questionnaire assessed what it was designed to measure. It was also translated into Vietnamese so that participants wouldn't have any difficulties with the questionnaire and the translation was validated by experts. It was then tested with five third-year students at UEF who were not included in the original research. Lastly, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .72 suggested that the internal consistency of the survey was satisfactory.

2.3. Data collection and analysis procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to all the participants at the end of the second semester of the school year 2021-2022. At first, the researcher asked for the help of the classroom instructors to enter their classes and collect data. Then, the researcher outlined exactly how participants should answer the survey questions and provided explanations for any questions that came up. After that, the questionnaire was completed and returned to the researcher by each participant after 10 minutes. As regards the data analysis, the SPSS 20.0 software was used to analyze the quantitative data. In particular, descriptive statistics, i.e., mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), was calculated.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

Table 2 illustrates the average score of the behavioral aspect, cognitive aspect, and affective aspect of language attitude, including the mean scores and standard deviation in each category. As illustrated in table 1, the mean scores in these categories were relatively high on average. Most of the students appreciated the behavioral aspect (M=4.26, SD=.39) and cognitive aspect of language attitude (M=4.26, SD=.36). Additionally, the score of the affective aspect of language attitude was fairly lower than the aforementioned two aspects (M=3.96, SD=.44). However, it can be interpreted that the majority of students showed positive attitudes towards the TBLT in reading comprehension class.

No.	Items	Interpretation -	n = 33	
			Μ	SD
1	Behavioral aspect	Strongly agree	4.26	.39
2	Cognitive aspect	Strongly agree	4.26	.36
3	Affective aspect	Agree	3.96	.44

Table 2. The average scores of behavioral aspect, cognitive aspect and affective aspect

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As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of participants expressed positive attitudes toward TBLT regarding the students' behavioral aspect of language attitudes. According to the findings, most of the students believed that they are able to "identify main content in a task-based reading class" (M=4.39, SD=.50). Additionally, most participants showed the agreement on being careful to provide positive remarks to their peers in reading comprehension classes (M=4.33, SD=.82) as well as "paying attention to reading materials" (M=4.33, SD=.65). Moreover, most students make themselves "learn English seriously in a task-based reading class" (M=4.30, SD=.64) and "spend more time on reading English outside the class" (M=4.24, SD=.75). Besides, many students also agreed that they were able to analyze the reading content, paid attention when their English teacher was delivering the lesson and took lots of time to explore the readings in the English textbook.

 Table 3. The behavioral aspect

No.	Items	Intermetation	n = 33	
INU.	Items	Interpretation-	Μ	SD
1	I spend a lot of time exploring the readings in the English textbook.	Agree	3.94	.66
2	I am careful to provide positive remarks to my peers in reading comprehension classes.	Strongly agree	4.33	.82
3	I pay attention to reading materials.	Strongly agree	4.33	.65
4	I learn English seriously in a task-based reading class.	Strongly agree	4.30	.64
5	I pay attention when my English teacher is delivering the lesson.	Agree	4.09	.63
6	I am capable of identifying main content in a task-based reading class.	Strongly agree	4.39	.50
7	I am capable of analyzing reading content.	Agree	4.15	.71
8	I spend more time on reading English outside the class (on the Internet, magazines, novels)	Strongly agree	4.24	.75

As demonstrated in Table 4, the majority of respondents exhibited favorable sentiments regarding TBLT in terms of the students' cognitive aspect of language attitudes. The results pointed out that the majority of the respondents expressed that they get better at evaluating their own learning process (M=4.39, SD=.66). Furthermore, most of them accepted that TBLT helped them to expand their vocabulary (M=4.39, SD=.61) as well as reading proficiency will assist them to learn other skills efficiently (M=4.39, SD=.66). In addition, most students showed agreement that TBLT helped them to acquire new knowledge that they can use in their actual life (M=4.33, SD=.60) and they want to improve their reading abilities by doing TBLT-based tasks (M=4.27, SD=.63). Also, many of them believed that TBLT enhanced their reading skills significantly, the lessons are more informative in this method and they become "more knowledgeable about several facets of life when being instructed with TBLT".

 Table 4. The cognitive aspect

No.	Items	Interpretation	n = 33	
110.	Items	Interpretation	Μ	SD
9	I want to enhance my reading abilities by doing TBLT-based tasks.	Strongly agree	4.27	.63
10	TBLT assists me in expanding my vocabulary.	Strongly agree	4.39	.61
11	I get better at evaluating my own learning process.	Strongly agree	4.42	.61
12	Reading proficiency will help me learn other skills effectively.	Strongly agree	4.39	.66
13	I am more knowledgeable about several facets of life when being instructed with TBLT.	Agree	4.03	.61
14	TBLT assists me in acquiring new information that I may apply to my actual life.	Strongly agree	4.33	.60
15	The lessons are more informative in this method.	Agree	4.09	.63
16	This method improves my reading skills significantly.	Agree	4.12	.60

As illustrated in Table 5, the majority of participants held positive opinions toward TBLT as regards the students' affective aspect of language attitudes. Most of the students expressed their agreement that they love interacting in English with their peers in a TBLT-based classroom (M=4.27, SD=.84). Moreover, they admitted that they "have enthusiasm for learning reading

comprehension in a TBLT-based class" (M=4.12, SD=.70), enjoy "learning and reading comprehension in a TBLT-based class" (M=4.03, SD=.73) and they are pleased with their performance in reading classes (M=4.03, SD=.88). Additionally, most students agreed that they look forward to attending TBLT-based reading lessons (M=3.91, SD=.72) and TBLT boosts their confidence in reading (M=3.91, SD=.63). Besides, many of them believed that TBLT decreases their anxiety regarding their reading comprehension as well as they do not experience anxiety when they had to answer a question in reading comprehension classes.

Table 5. The	affective	aspect
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No.	Items	Interpretation	n = 33	
INO.	Items	merpretation	Μ	SD
17	TBLT decreases my anxiety regarding my reading comprehension.	Agree	3.82	.73
18	I enjoy communicating in English with others in a TBLT-based class.	Strongly agree	4.27	.84
19	I have enthusiasm for learning reading comprehension in a TBLT-based class.	Agree	4.12	.70
20	I am interested in learning and reading comprehension in a TBLT-based class.	Agree	4.03	.73
21	I look forward to attending TBLT-based reading lessons.	Agree	3.91	.72
22	I do not experience anxiety when I have to answer a question in reading comprehension classes.	Agree	3.61	.79
23	This method boosts my confidence in reading.	Agree	3.91	.63
24	I am pleased with my performance in reading classes.	Agree	4.03	.88

3.2. Discussion

According to the findings of the present study, students' attitudes toward the use of TBLT in reading comprehension classes were generally positive. Initially, in terms of the behavioral aspect of language attitudes, it is observed that the majority of students indicated that they were interested in studying reading and were excited and motivated to acquire reading comprehension in a TBLT-based class. Chen and Wang [7] indicated that TBLT fostered the self-improvement and self-reliance of students and boosts the innate motivation of students which was relevant to the findings of the study. Additionally, TBLT is superior since it may encourage students to actively engage in learning activities and increase their reading comprehension performance [21].

Secondly, regarding the cognitive aspect of language attitudes, most of the participants desired to learn reading comprehension using TBLT tasks. These findings were supported by [22], who emphasized the function of TBLT in inspiring students and altering their views toward EFL through its varied activities. They discovered that task-based activities provided students with feelings of engagement and accomplishment in a cooperative and active learning setting where the language was exposed in a natural and relevant manner. Moreover, TBLT-based cooperative activities encourage students to engage in conversation and exchange ideas. This assists them to get more information about the lessons and connect it with their real life.

Thirdly, as regards the affective aspect of language attitudes, the majority of the responders admitted that they are interested in TBLT reading tasks and look forward to the next reading class. NamazianDost et al. [23] pointed out that students in TBLT reading class maintain harmonious connections with their group members and frequently strive to complete and deliver their tasks to the entire class, as well as give quick assistance to others, which attributes to their enthusiasm for reading comprehension by employing TBLT.

The most realistic judgments in the current study support raising students' motivation by encouraging them to be active and cooperative in the language learning environment by employing the TBLT strategy. In task-based reading activities, students were encouraged to perform tasks that were captivating and challenging enough to push them to solve issues, fill in gaps, exert effort, and be self-directed learners. In addition, the data suggested that meaningful learning and real interactions, as well as relevant, purposeful, and meaningful reading tasks, helped encourage students' learning activities. Consequently, their attitudes towards the implementation of TBLT in reading comprehension classes were generally favorable.

4. Conclusion and implications

It can be concluded that the attitudes of students about the usage of TBLT were generally favorable. In TBLT reading lessons, students become more engaged and driven. As a result of reading class activities, students' passion for discussing, sharing, and expressing their ideas or opinions about the reading materials rose. They observed that the actions of the TBLT strategy supplied them with several benefits and advantages for enhancing their reading comprehension.

The following instructional implications are suggested on the basis of the aforementioned findings. Regarding the students, to get the optimal learning outcomes, students must be motivated and have the enthusiasm to study. This means they should focus on setting and achieving learning objectives, being creative while studying, participating actively in class discussions, and interacting with teachers and peers. As regards teachers, they should be aware that most of the tasks are student-centered. Moreover, the tasks they designed should be meaningful and purposeful, which can help the students to link the knowledge to real-life situations. Teachers should develop reading activities and supervise reading phases carefully and rationally to inspire students. Only when students are highly motivated can learning become simpler and more efficient. In regard to the administrators, they should encourage English teachers to employ TBLT for high school students in reading classes, as it could bring positive results to students' reading performance as well as their learning attitudes.

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