

Task-based Language Teaching(TBLT) in Chinese Higher Education: EFL Teachers' Perceptions

Yuying Liu & Angela Chambers & Freda Mishan
University of Limerick/Limerick, Ireland

Key words:TBLT, EFL teachers, Chinese college

ABSTRACT

Very large numbers in English language classes in China present a challenge to language learners, teachers and policy makers. Nunan's (2003) proposal that TBLT can be of particular relevance in the Asia-Pacific countries suggests that empirical studies in this area are necessary. This paper reports on an empirical study of the perceptions of Chinese teachers of English in higher education.

As the number of English learners in China has increased dramatically, it is not rare to have a college class with over 100 students especially since the expansion of college enrolment in 1999 (Wang & Zhang, 2011). Nunan (2003) suggests that TBLT emerges as a central concept from a study of curriculum guidelines and syllabi in Asia-Pacific countries including Japan, Vietnam, China, Korea and Malaysia. The National Curriculum Syllabus for English Language Teaching in China, published in 2001, advocates the use of TBLT. But TBLT has not been sufficiently researched to be proven empirically in classroom practice in foreign language learning in higher education (Carless, 2004; Zhang, 2005). Research on curriculum innovation and implementation suggests that one of the causes of the discrepancy between theory and classroom practice may be teacher attitudes (Evdokia, 1996). Teachers are inclined to translate innovative ideas to conform with their own style of teaching (Wagner, 1991).

This study investigates EFL teachers' attitudes towards TBLT and assesses the current implementation of TBLT in Chinese colleges. The methodology is primarily qualitative and analysis is carried out via questionnaires and interviews. This paper reports on the research design and focuses in particular on the results of the study involving the interview and a questionnaire survey of teachers' familiarity with the concept of TBLT, their use of this method, and the challenges it poses for their practice as English teachers.