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Obstacles Inhibiting Iranian EFL Teachers' Implementation of Task-Based Instruction

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Abstract

Although Task-Based Instruction (TBI) has received large attention on the part of English practitioners throughout the world, it seems that there is yet a huge gap between the Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices in implementing it in real classes. Hence, this study set out to unearth the possible sources of difficulties in using TBI in EFL classes. To meet the goals, a total of 120 male and female EFL teachers were selected through stratified random sampling from Iran language institute (ILI) branches in Tehran, Iran. After critically reviewing the literature and using a flow chart technique, a questionnaire including 20 items was developed, piloted, and distributed among the participants. Then, the collected data were analyzed through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Results indicated that three main factors, namely *lack of appropriate assessment methods*, *cultural difference*, and *efficacy of the method* received the utmost significance from the EFL teachers' perspectives that have led to not using TBI. In the end, the implications of the findings were discussed for different stakeholders.

Keywords: confirmatory factor analysis, EFL teachers, inhibiting factors, task-based instruction

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1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, Second Language (L2) teaching and learning has become one of the most challenging phenomena to the point of obsession for all social classes and age groups. Millions of dollars and thousands of hours are spent annually on L2 instruction in the four corners of the world. School and university students are in the front row among other candidates of L2 learning competition. These groups have realized that appropriate interaction with world outside cannot be possible unless they are equipped with the medium of communication, which is the English language, in the 21st century. As a result of this thirst for learning English, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers have left no stone unturned to bring about a reform movement in L2 teaching traditional approaches and methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In consequence, in order to accelerate the language learning interactions and reduce grammatical rules and vocabulary habits of memorization, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged. In fact, since L2 was not efficiently and satisfactorily acquired through behavioristic approach where the focus was mostly given on repetition and memorization, cognitive approach was warmly welcomed by L2 researchers (Nunan, 2004). Moreover, social dimensions of L2 learning process were highlighted in more recent theories such as sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000). This theory led to the encouragement of students' participation in group work and stressed the collaborative aspects of learning process. All these perspectives, in sum, have paved the way for the strong version of CLT, namely, Task-Based Instruction (TBI).

1.1 Statement of the problem

TBI has gained considerable interest within applied linguistics and in recent decades it has gone beyond research settings and been used in mainstream education not only in the Benelux countries but in China (Van den Braden, 2012; Wang & Lam, 2009). However, English language teaching methodology in Iran is suffering from inefficiency which is associated to the unworkable, outdated pedagogies used to design and teach English syllabuses and materials (Akbari et al., 2008; Mostafaee & Estaji, 2018). In the past ten years, TBI has become an increasingly important segment of English language teaching in Iran. Research on the reasons for and consequences of the shift from traditional methods to TBI approach has focused on EFL teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards TBI usefulness and efficiency (Amini, Mahmoudi Langarani, & Hedayat, 2019; Mahdavirad, 2017).

Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' lack of motivation to learn a foreign language is becoming an area of increasing concern in many English classes (Akbari et al., 2008). When EFL learners lose their interest in learning a foreign language, despite existing approaches like TBI, it is crystal clear that there is something wrong with English teaching programs or teachers' mastery over teaching materials. In other words, it can be hypothesized that there are some obstacles which have prohibited the Iranian EFL teachers from using and benefiting from new approaches such as TBI to raise efficiently Communicative Competence (CC) in L2 learners. Addressing this problem will have practical benefits for English teaching programs in Iran and contribute to understanding of this widespread phenomenon.

This study aims to better understand existing obstacles which discourage EFL teachers from implementing TBI in classes. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will identify factors impeding TBI use in English classes through a questionnaire which is designed and validated by the researchers.

1.2 Research questions

To throw light on this issue, this study aims at investigating the Iranian English teachers' dominance and mastery over the TBI pedagogy. In fact, with the insights which will be taken from the Iranian EFL teachers, the possible obstacles inhibiting the use of TBI will be more or less clarified. To meet such aims, the following research questions are investigated:

1) Is it possible to design and validate a questionnaire regarding the Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions toward TBI efficiency or inefficiency in their classes?

2) Which factors do impede EFL teachers from TBI implementation?

1.3 Research hypothesis

In order to examine the second research question, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

H0: There are no factors which impede EFL teachers from TBI implementation in English language classes in Iran.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Task Emergence

CLT successfully made the way for the paradigm shift in L2 learning approaches and methods. This change of conceptualization originated from a considerable number of state-of-the-art concepts in education. In past, the process of instruction was solely accompanied by 'transmission' approaches in which students were considered as empty accounts to be filled by teachers (Freire, 1970). This criticism could also be traced in John Dewey's (1910) concept of 'learning-by-doing.' He elaborated that education must result in 'social change' rather than the transmission of facts.

Additionally, humanistic approaches were introduced by Rogers (1983). Humanistic psychology emphasized some unique characteristics of human being that have always been reiterated in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and especially TBI. The basic principles of humanistic psychology, in general, stress that human being must be looked at from this angle that she/he has the capacity and capability to choose, create, look for meaning, follow goals, and be aware of oneself in the presence of other people. This particular point of view toward learning encourages students to take up the responsibility for their processes of learning and take an intrinsic attitude toward motivation rather than an extrinsic one.

SLA researchers did not drop behind in what Marckwardt (1972) calls "changing winds and shifting sands" (p. 5). EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) researchers devised a medium in L2 instruction to include all the elements considered by educational, philosophical, and psychological pioneers in the turn of the 21st century that described the immediate need of the current language learners. This conducive medium is called 'task.' Task rejuvenated the vigorous but immature CLT principles. As Nunan (2004) puts it, CLT provides "why" responses to the language teaching reforms while TBI provides "how" responses. Tasks are designed in such a way that they subsume the modernized version of traditional PPP model drills and exercises. Ellis (2003) declares this modernized version based on the voluminous number of definitions for task in the literature. He identified "criterial features" for task as follows (p. 34):

1. A task acts as a work plan
2. Meaning is a priority in a task
3. Real-world situations must be accounted in a task
4. All four language skills can be considered in a task
5. Cognitive processes can be an essential part of a task
6. There must be an outcome as a result of doing a task

All in all, TBI is not totally a new approach in applied linguistics. However, this approach tries to take advantage of CLT principles and procedures by putting task at the center of its methodological conception. TBI envisages the processes of L2 learning as a battery of communicative tasks which are akin to the learning goals they introduce, the goals that go far beyond the practice of linguistic features of language instruction. Tasks must fulfill the gap of real world objectives in classroom situations by means of problem solving and reasoning gap activities which involves, as Prabhu (1987) asserts, "deriving some new information from given information through process of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns" (p.75).

2.2 TBI Criticism

In spite of CLT's extensive acceptance owing to suggesting a set of unique conventions and practices to design more promising language syllabuses and teaching materials, a few researchers have questioned its efficacy and practicality to be implemented in real classes (Swan, 1985). For example, the criticism of the errors endurance in L2 learners' production have been ascribed to excessive insistence on fluency in language teaching activities of TBI at the expense of accuracy, producing excellent command of fluency accompanied with a high level of fossilization (Higgs & Clifford, 1982). Moreover, as another drawback with CLT, Holliday (1994) stresses that CLT mirrors Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA) cultural standards. The teaching principles and procedures in these countries

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mirror instrumental objectives of the immigrants rather than considering the needs and wants of language learners in other countries at tertiary, secondary, or primary (TESEP) levels.

Another criticism levelled at CLT is attributed to huge differences in terms of learning cultures across the world. It means that L2 learners in Asia and Africa may bring quite different assumptions to the teaching and learning principles of CLT opposed to L2 learners in BANA countries (Ahmad & Rao, 2012). L2 learners, for instance, have often reckoned that by using this new method, CLT, teachers are wasting the time and not doing the business of teaching. Chowdhry (2010) puts this resistance toward CLT in non-BANA countries in this way,

"In Bangladesh, students expect teachers to be authority figures and the teaching methods to conform to the traditional "lock-stop" teacher-centered approach where the teacher gives orders to students, who then comply… Students feel tempted to discard the new style and complain that the teacher is not teaching… They knew that their status and role had suddenly been violated by something new" (p.83).

With respect to the assessment issues, CLT has proposed alternative language testing batteries (e.g., journals, interviews, observation, and portfolios) to replace the long-established traditional assessment techniques like multiple-choice, matching, and true-false questions (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Despite the remarkable positive waskback effect that these alternative assessment methods may create, when EFL teachers are asked to explain how task-based assessments are administered on either high or low stakes tests, the majority of the respondents are most likely to remain silent (Nunan, 2004). The reasons for this cold-shoulder that have been given to task-based assessments is that L2 teachers are not well familiar with appropriate specifications for designing, implementing, and grading tasks (Carless, 2003). In addition, it seems that L2 teachers sometimes get confused to consider tasks as direct assessment (learners are expected to act the same as the way they communicate in the real world) or indirect assessment (learners are not required to respond the same as outside-class performance) (Robinson & Ross, 1996). Though in an attempt to solve this problem, Skehan (1998) developed a framework with reference to accuracy, fluency, and complexity, it seems that most of EFL teachers around the world yet have hesitation in embarking on task-based assessments.

Another issue that should be highlighted in the discussion of the development and restriction of TBI is related to the role of educational policy makers. Although different versions of TBI have been practiced in many ministries of education and educational institutes around the world, surprisingly, it has not yet received attention in other countries due to the tiny significance that the educational policy makers of these countries have allocated to TBI. For instance, in a study conducted by Nunan (2003), the findings revealed that policy makers in the Asia-pacific region were of the opinion that TBI should be considered as a major approach in designing English language programs and materials. In consequence, they played a crucial role in pursuing and holding in-service training courses for teachers in order to comply with the new approach.

2.3 Empirical Studies on the TBI Implementation in EFL Context

In line with the support and criticism levelled at TBI, several studies have been conducted to cast light on the implementation of TBI in classes in EFL contexts. Here, we try to go over them critically. In an early study, Carless (2003) came up with an exploratory framework for the implementation of TBI in primary school classrooms in Hon Kong through a qualitative study. This study went over six issues that impacted teaching TBI in class. These possible components were teacher attitude/beliefs, teacher understanding, time available, textbook/topic, preparation/resourcing, and language proficiency of students. Consequently, the tentative framework was presented to build a number of educational changes on the existing values and understanding of the teachers willing to implement TBI in English classes.

In another study run by Jeon and Hahn (2006), it was found out that there are a number of negative views toward the implementation of TBI. In sum, the findings indicated that the participants felt that task-based assessment which is different from the traditional assessment methods in terms of planning, implementing, and grading is highly demanding and complex. Likewise, the results unveiled that from the perceptions of the participants sticking to old-fashioned lecture-oriented methods causes less psychological pressure on the teacher opposed to the procedures of TBI putting the teachers under huge affective pressure. Finally, it turned out that lack of confidence and knowledge both from teachers and learners have led to avoiding implementing TBI activities in EFL classes.

Further, in order to tackle the obstacles in the application of TBI, Carless (2007) proposes a weak version of TBI to pinpoint context-sensitive approaches. In his study, 'Situated Task-Based' approaches were introduced to concentrate

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on the setting and culture in which they happen. In brief, the features building these approaches are: grammar teaching in the pre-task phase of a task cycle, task-supported teaching accompanied by the PPP approach, task in connection with assessment essentials, and substitutions for oral tasks containing reading and writing.

Van Le (2014) explored the factors that affect EFL teachers' implementation of TBI at the tertiary level. The findings of this study revealed both external and internal factors. Considering the external factors, class size, time allocation, appropriate textbooks, students' English proficiency, and motivation would decide the success of TBI. Regarding internal factors, teachers' experience in EFL, their knowledge about TBI, teachers' English proficiency, teachers' training, and their familiarity with technology could promote or hinder the teachers' implementation of TBI.

In the same vein, Tan (2016) suggests a context-sensitive TBI approach in which traditional values and teachers' teaching belief can be well met in the current EFL contexts. Regarding the existing educational problems caused by the traditional English teaching methods, this study could detect challenges in the implementation of TBI in EFL context of China. Firstly, Tan identified a vast difference between Chinese Confucian-heritage teaching and learning culture that emphasized teacher-centered approach compared to TBI rooted in Western culture stressing student-centered approach. Secondly, in the Chinese context delivery of knowledge rather than improving communicative skills is a priority. Thus, TBI cannot prepare L2 learners for the assessment tasks which are more form-focused in China. Thirdly, owing to the lack of appropriate contexts with the medium of English in China, both teachers and learners are obliged to believe that TBI is mostly applicable for advanced levels and not useful for young learners who lack high levels of English proficiency.

Furthermore, Azari Noughabi (2017) attempted to unveil EFL teachers' pedagogical problems with the communicative approaches in Iran. This qualitative paper illustrated four main themes, namely teacher, learner, context, and material. The author believes that by boosting teachers' autonomy and their level of proficiency, teacher position will enhance to embark on using new communicative approaches. Materials, he adds that, must be accurately supervised, organized, and planned. Learners' motivation should be dealt with otherwise it will cause teacher burn out. Finally, he comments that by having observation sessions for teachers and also teacher training courses, the context would be far more conducive for the implementation of the communicative approaches.

In the end, Ji (2017) investigated the mismatches between educational concepts regarding TBI and the sociocultural context in Asia through interview, observation, and survey studies. In general, six factors were found to be the main constraints on TBI implementation in EFL classes. Ji assorts these six problems and their provisional solutions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Problems and solutions associated with tasks

Task Component	Problem	Solution
Goals	Uncertain assessment of learners' performance, mismatch with exam culture	Assessment for learning, formal teaching training
Input	Lack of authentic input, mismatch with textbook	Daily life resources, and teachers' own input and curriculum
Activities	Frequent L1 use, mismatch between implementation and rationales	Learners' motivation to use target language, and teachers' professional development
Setting	Large class size, limited time	Instruction on students' performance, and decrease of task number
Teacher roles	Teachers' misunderstanding of TBI and lack of proficiency	Professional training, hybrid methods, and training on pedagogical methods

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Learner roles	Learner's misunderstanding of TBI, lack of proficiency	Sufficient linguistic input, learners' responsibility to supervise group discussion

2.4 Inefficiency of English Instruction in Iranian Schools

Science advances besides the recent explosion of information technologies have created the 'global village' concept. Due to this phenomenon, a common language is needed to bridge the gap of communication in this village. The English language has done justice to the current issue. As a result, designing the most appropriate L2 learning and teaching methods for each geographical region in this village seems to be inevitable. On the other hand, sticking to the outdated educational policies has hindered this endeavor.

Iranian experts in education believe that there are some reasons inhibiting students from being a proficient English user. Akbari, Kiany, Imani Naeeni, and Karimi Allvar (2008) elaborate on the obstacles of inefficiency of English language instruction programs in Iran. They confirm that it is the responsibility of the educational system to set the proper ground for students to become familiar with modern sciences and to prepare them for post-graduate studies. For this purpose, they note that, one thing is absolutely unavoidable, learning English, as the globalized language at the current time. Despite this paramount importance in learning English, they conclude that the Iranian students are not willing to learn a second language, teachers do not have sufficient hours for teaching, as well as sufficient mastery over materials, there are not enough appropriate teaching aid materials, and there is an over emphasis on grammar and lexis rather than communication skills.

A recent educational conference run by Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported on Allameh Tabatabaee University faculty members' views in connection with English language teaching problems and the tentative solutions in Iran. The head of English language and literature department expressed that "One of the significant reasons may be due to English language methodology which impedes students from achieving the qualitative goals" (Mostafaee & Estaji, 2018, p.10). She more added that "the current obsolete teaching method has adversely impacted the quality results we yearn for" (Mostafaee & Estaji, 2018, p.12). Additionally, another faculty member asserted that "English teachers have not been successful in transmitting educational materials as well. Educational methodologies, pre-service, and in-service teacher training programs have not been taken seriously by both the teachers and policy makers, and it seems that there hasn't been a comprehensive plan behind these programs" (Mostafaee & Estaji, 2018, p.35).

In order to more illustrate the serious state of the affairs, world statistics can be of a great help. To do so, we can compare and contrast countries and regions with similar skill levels to identify the Iranian proficiency level of English in the world. An international world known organization called Education First (EF) releases the first-ever world ranking of general English. The EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) is widely referenced in the academic, business, and popular media. The eighth edition of the EF EPI in 2018 revealed precious information about the Iranian's English scores against 87 other countries. This report places the countries into five proficiency bands: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. As an extremely surprising result, Iran got placed in very low ranking which means 66 among 88 countries in the world.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In terms of design, the current study is a cross-sectional survey since the data were collected at one point in time through distributing a questionnaire. In this respect, CFA was used to analyze and confirm the factors that unveil the obstacles that may inhibit the Iranian EFL teachers in implementation of TBI in their classes.

3.2 Participants

The sample population of the study consisted of 120 EFL teachers, including 60 females, 52 males, and 8 participants missing selected from different ILI branches in Tehran. Stratified random sampling was used to increase the generalizability of the findings through selecting the participants at ILI branches in Tehran. Concerning the education level of the participants, they held three different university degrees, namely B.A. 26.4%, M.A. 54.7%, and Ph.D. 18.9%. They were also categorized according to their teaching experience as such the participants with 0-5 years of experience were 18.9%, those with 5-10 years of experience were 25.5%, the teachers with 10-20 years of experience

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were 42.5%, and those with 20-30 years of experience were 13.2%. It is noteworthy that the participation in the current study was voluntary, the participating teachers were assured that their responses would remain confidential, and they would be kept informed about the final findings.

3.3 Instrument

In order to gather the required data, to uncover the obstacles that may inhibit the Iranian EFL teachers in using TBI in their classes, the researchers designed and developed a scale which covers the TBI principles and procedures. In other words, after having reviewed critically the available literature on TBL, the researchers came up with 30 items which can clarify the possible obstacles in using it. These items regarded the possible difficulties that may hinder teachers from using TBI in English classes. Based on the literature review, there were some general themes that probably cause difficulty for using TBI. Items 17, 21, 22, 23 contained 'lack of appropriate assessment methods'; items 2, 11, 20, 26, 28 were about 'lack of policy makers' support; items 3, 12, 15, 19, 25, 29, 9 regarded 'cultural difference'; items 1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14, 18, 24, 27 included 'efficacy of the method'; and items 4,7,8,16,30 were ' lack of time' (Appendix A). However, after the piloting and the first administration of the questionnaire and running CFA, some items were deleted and revised based on theoretical considerations. Consequently, a revised questionnaire was accepted as a final instrument for extracting the factors of which TBI was an obstacle in English classes. Respectively, items 17, 21, 22, 23 for 'lack of appropriate assessment methods'; items 3, 12, 15, 19, 25, 29 for 'cultural differences'; and items 4, 6, 7, 8, 14, 27, 30 for 'efficacy of method' (Appendix B).

3.4 Procedures

Designing, writing, and implementing the items followed the stages recommended by Cohen and his associates (2017).

1. At the beginning stage, a flow chart technique was used to organize the arrangement of the questions. In this way, the type and range of answers that the questions were probable to extract were predictable for the researchers.

2. At the next stage, the participants and the sample size of the study were decided. Based on the availability of the English teachers in institutions and schools, approximately around 120 EFL teachers were considered to respond the questionnaire.

3. At the third stage, in line with the sample size, the type of questionnaire for the current study was planned. It should be noted that the kind of the questionnaire is largely determined by the sample size such that the larger the sample size, the more structured the questionnaire may have to be. Hence, due to the theories supporting TBI and the possible comparisons and patterns to be observed in this enquiry, a structured questionnaire was chosen to meet the objectives of the study.

4. The fourth stage is devoted to selecting items designing mode. Although there are plenty sorts of item designing modes, for the purposes of the current study, a range of responses from which the participants may respond were designed in highly structured and closed type items. The advantages of closed questions are numerous as they can produce various types of responses suitable for statistical analysis and they can also make the comparisons among many groups in the sample possible.

5. Regarding the scale of data, two types of scales: *nominal* and *ordinal* and three types of questions were used: *dichotomous questions* for identifying gender, *multiple choice* questions for identifying the number of years in teaching, and the academic degree, *rating scales (Likert scales)* for the rest of the questions.

6. The sixth stage was concerned with sequencing where the common belief is that the questions should be ordered from objective facts to subjective attitudes and opinions. Thus, in this study, the items started from unthreatening questions about gender and qualifications and then moved to closed items eliciting views and perceptions (see Appendix).

7. Piloting the questionnaire which is a crucial procedure for assuring about its reliability and validity (Oppenheim, 1992; Wilson & McLean, 1994) was done in the next step. In actuality, the piloting enabled the researchers to gain feedback on different aspects of the questionnaire and remove ambiguities and misunderstanding in wording and content. In doing so, the TBI obstacles questionnaire was distributed among 30 EFL teachers which to a large extent resembled the participants of the main studies. The results of Cronbach's Alpha (0.80) indicated that the questionnaire enjoyed a high level of reliability. Moreover, the validity of the questionnaire was gauged through experts' judgment. That is, the instrument was given to two university professors in Applied Linguistics to comment on the face and

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content-relatedness of the items. In general, they found the questionnaire valid though they made some comments to improve the validity of the questionnaire.

8. The eighth phase was administration phase. In general, a total of 120 English teachers completed the questionnaire. It is worth noting that in order to avoid possible misunderstanding on the part of the participants, the questionnaire's item were translated with care into Persian by a well-experienced translator.

9. The validity of the main study will be reported in the results section.

In sum, a number of distinct steps were taken to run the current study. First, the questionnaire was designed and developed and then translated into Persian in order to make sure that the teachers can fully grasp the content and increase the response rate. By applying a flow chart technique and also reviewing the past literature, the researchers came up with four factors underlying the obstacles inhibited teachers from using TBI. Finally, in order to confirm the number of factors, CFA was conducted.

3.5 Data Collection

To carry out the current study, total number of 120 English language teachers from Tehran ILI branches were selected using stratified random sampling. All these ILI teachers were holding B.A./M.A./Ph.D. degrees majoring in one of the EFL fields including English teaching, English literature, and English translation. Then, the participating teachers were asked to answer the revised questionnaire through web-based survey technique and social network groups called ILI English teachers. As might be expected, participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential, and they had the right to quit at any part of the survey. It took approximately 10 minutes for each respondent to fill out the survey.

3.6 Data Analysis

Using Amos version 8, in addition to common descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the factors of the questionnaire. CFA is a technique in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which takes a confirmatory hypothesis testing (Kline, 2011).

4. Results

The current study, as mentioned above, aimed at shedding light on obstacles that inhibit the Iranian EFL teachers in using TBI principles and procedures in English language classes in Iran. Moreover, in line with the first research question, a structured questionnaire was designed based on technical steps mentioned in the procedure section and reviewing the substantial body of literature and it was also validated through the experts' judgment. This questionnaire sought out to uncover the factors resulting in not using TBI in the Iranian EFL context.

In the similar vein, the second research question searched for the unknown factors to be confirmed in the questionnaire. To confirm these factors, CFA was utilized. As can be observed in Figure 1, the results obtained from the Screen test show that a four-factor solution might not provide an appropriate grouping of the items in the questionnaire. Figure 1 indicates that factors 1, 2, 3, and 4 consisted of 4, 5, 7, and 14 items, respectively. For a suitable factor solution, a particular item should load high on one factor. Researchers commonly use a cut-off 0.40 to identify high loadings. In this study, it is observable that items 17, 21, 22, and 23 are loading high on factor 1. Items 2, 11, 20, 26, and 28 are loading low on factor 2. Items 3, 12, 15, 19, 25, and 29 are loading high but item 9 is loading low on factor 3. Items 1, 5, 6, and 10 are loading low but items 13, 14, 16, 18, 24, and 27 are loading high on factor 4. In this case, those variables loading low on factors were dropped and factor 2 (lack of policy makers' support) was deleted based on theoretical considerations.

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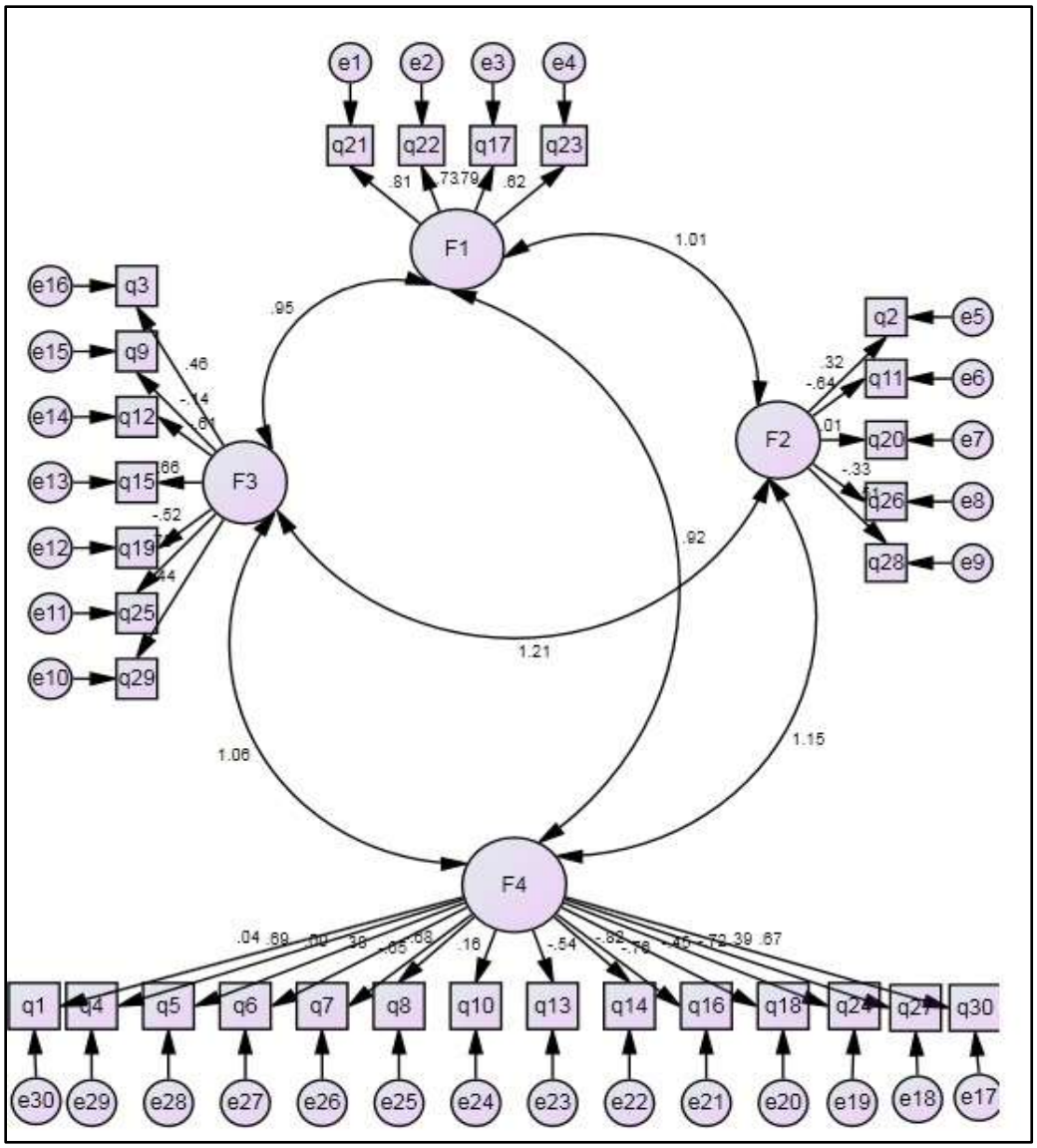


Figure 1. The results of CFA for the pilot study

Once some modifications and rewordings were done and the items corresponding to particular factors with high factor loadings were obtained, the researchers determined to administer the revised questionnaire, which contained 18 items, to another group of teachers in order to see whether the correlation among the observed variables are consistent with the hypothesized factor structure. Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics related to the three factors, including (F_1: lack of appropriate assessment methods; F_3: cultural difference; and F_4: efficacy of the method) elicited from the administered questionnaire.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the extracted factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor1	112	4.00	16.00	9.7140	3.39958
$Factor_3$	112	6.00	19.00	12.2500	3.63045
Factor4	112	8.00	27.00	16.8303	4.73398
Valid N (listwise)	112				

As can be seen from the above Table, the Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for the factor 1 are M (9.71) and SD (3.39), for factor 3 are M (12.25) and SD (3.63), and for factor 4 are M (16.83) and SD (4.73), respectively. Furthermore, to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each factor (Table 3).

Table 3. Reliability statistics for each factor

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
F_1(lack of appropriate assessment methods)	.828	4
F_3(cultural difference)	.747	6
F_4(efficacy of the method)	.836	8

Once again, CFA was run to confirm the factor structure of the revised questionnaire. The results presented in (Figure 2) indicate that the three factor solutions might provide an appropriate grouping of the items in the revised questionnaire.

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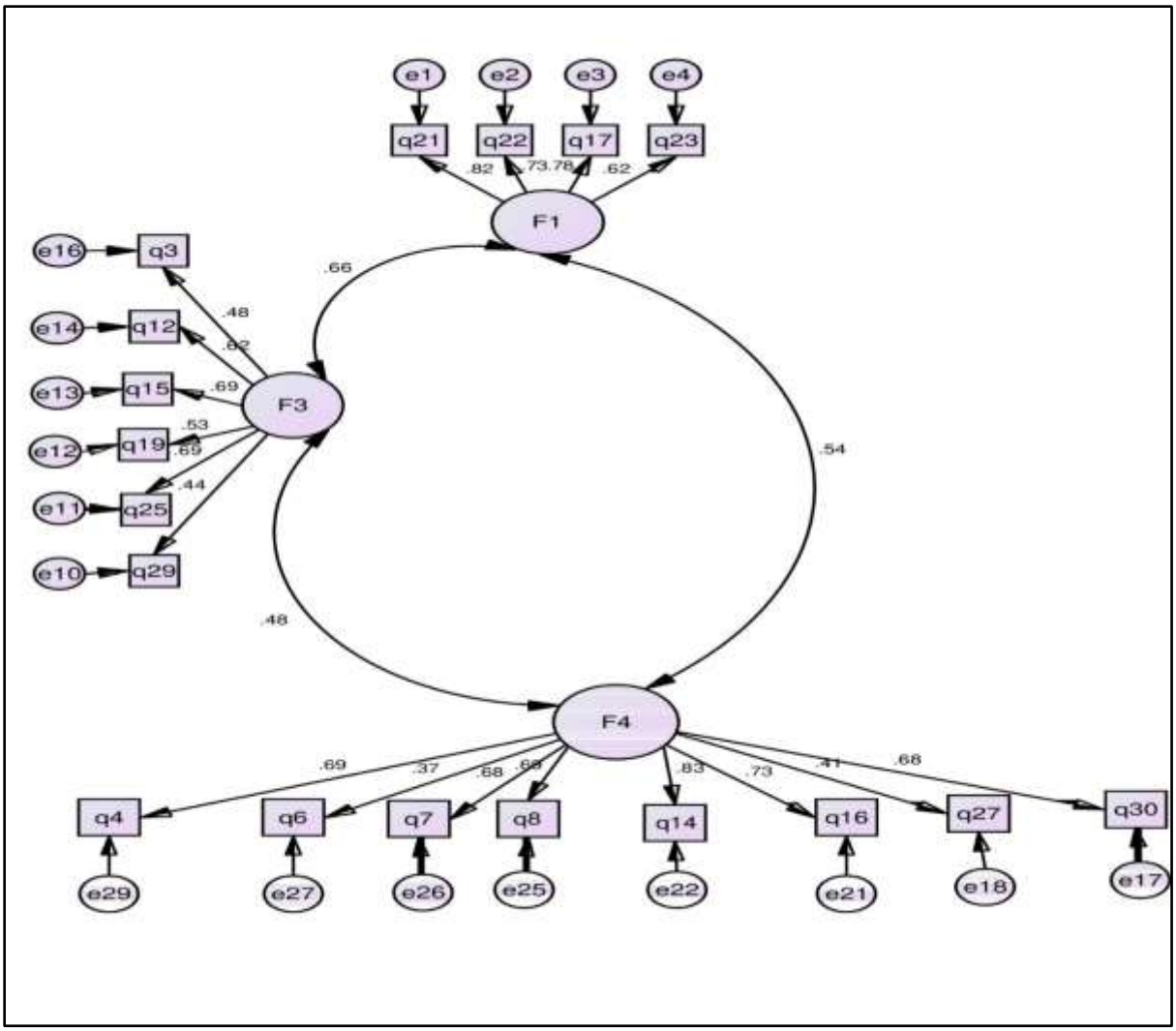


Figure 2. The results of CFA for the revised questionnaire

Factors 1, 3, and 4 consisted of 4, 6, 8 items respectively, as it is illustrated in Figure2, all the items in the revised questionnaire are loading high on all three factors. In addition, all the three factors yielded acceptable reliability estimates ranging from 0.74 to 0.84 (Table 2).

In Structural Equation Modeling technique, goodness of fit indices in Amos was used to ascertain that the model fits the data properly. For the current study, x^2/df (chi-square divided by degree of freedom), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used. To have a good fit model, x^2/df should be less than 3, AGFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI should be above 0.80, and RMSEA should be less than 0.08 (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The results of the CFA indicated that all the goodness-of-fit indices were acceptable (See Table 4). Thus, the CFA confirmed the factor structure of the revised questionnaire.

Table 4. Goodness-of-fit indices

Fit index	X^2/df	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable range	<3	>.80				<.08
	2.19	0.69	0.84	0.81	0.84	0.07

5. Discussion

Since the emergence of TBI, a voluminous number of studies have been conducted to accentuate the efficiency of TBI as a real-life pedagogy to facilitate second language instruction (Berreta, 1990; Ellis, 2003; Leaver & Kaplan, 2004; Shehadeh, 2005). As mentioned above, the benefits of TBI in terms of practicality in L2 teaching and learning have been demonstrated across the world (Nunan, 2004). In spite of the extensive and implementation of TBI in different parts of the world, it seems that TBI yet has not gained extensive acceptance in the Iranian EFL context. The reason for this seems to be a number of factors impeding EFL teachers from implementing TBI in English classes (Akbari et al., 2008; Mostafaee & Estaji, 2018). To consider this important issue, the researchers tried to develop and validate a scale to uncover the existing obstacles EFL teachers faced with in the use of TBI in their classes. To achieve the above-alluded goals, this study, at first, was to design and validate a questionnaire to explore the Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions with respect to TBI implementation in their classes. In addition, an attempt was made to uncover the factors that may inhibit the Iranian EFL teachers in implementation of TBI. In line with the purpose of the research questions, as reported above, a questionnaire, characterized by minute and in depth review of the related literature, was developed and then CFA was run to confirm a three-factor model. These factors are named as, *lack of appropriate assessment methods* (items: 17, 21, 22, 23); *cultural difference* (items: 3, 12, 15, 19, 25, 29); *efficacy of the method* (items: 4, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16, 27, 30).

'Lack of appropriate assessment methods' is the label for the first factor which includes 4 items. Item 17 refers to focusing on fluency and ignoring accuracy which makes final assessment complicated for the teachers (Skehan, 1996). Item 21 deals with integration of skills that doesn't explain clearly the learners' language competence in assessment. Item 22 treats the real nature of the tasks that prepare learners for direct assessment that causes confusion when assessment is indirect (Pica, 1998). And Item 23 concerns with using bizarre discourse in doing tasks which causes bewilderment for assessment (Nunan, 2004). In line with this factor, it can be argued that one of the staple obstacles in the implementation of TBI is the problems that EFL teachers have in assessing the L2 learners' abilities. In fact, this problem may root in the fact that though task-based assessment has been strongly advocated in the literature due to the abundant advantages it brings on the board, it has not been practiced a lot by teachers (Brown & Hudson, 1998). For example, it seems that designing, implementing, and evaluating tasks is not a simple undertaking. Task-based assessments are relatively difficult to produce and relatively time-consuming to administer (Brown & Hudson, 1998). In addition, it has been demonstrated that teachers need to specify the purpose, select the appropriate task, develop the scoring criteria, supervise the process, and finally score the product or performance (Bachman, 2002).

The findings are in accordance with study of Anil and Acar (2009) reporting that in Turkey TBI was conceived to much difficult by teachers. The teachers maintained that task based assessments are to be effective and applicable to measure the real abilities of the students. They more added that designing and implementing tasks take too much time they have no beneficial effects on students' achievement in the high school entrance examinations. In addition, the findings lend support to the results of the study conducted by Çiftçi (2010). In brief, the findings revealed that the teachers interviewed in the study were of the opinion that though TBI can be advantageous, they are not fully eager to implement it in their classes. They reported that a lion's share of this resistance lies in the problems they have with its assessment. Some of these problems include lack of time for the preparation and presentation of the tasks, inadequate facilities of the schools, and negative attitudes of parents towards task-based assessments.

To discuss further the findings, it is fair to say that 'lack of appropriate assessment methods' factor was somehow in consistent with the specified obstacles inhibiting the EFL teachers from implementing TBI in language classes in the past literature. As reported above, the findings revealed that the teachers in Iran had difficulty in applying the right methods for measuring L2 learners' competence despite accepting TBI's effectiveness in English language teaching and learning as a comprehensive approach. In line with this factor, Jeon and Hahn (2006) found out that English

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teachers considered TBI assessments completely different from their own traditional assessments. In addition, the findings for this factor lend credence to Tan (2016) reporting that TBI provides learners with a meaning-focused assessment rather than form-focused on which is regarded as a complete deviation from educational philosophy in China. Hence, the participants in the study expressed hesitation in using the approach in their classes. Furthermore, Ji (2017) investigated mismatches between instructional concepts of TBI and the sociocultural concepts in Asia. He came upon six problems among which 'uncertain assessment of learners' performance' was considered paramount.

With respect to the second factor called 'cultural difference', 6 items were loaded. Items 3, 12, 15, and 29, in general, refer to a radical critique of the impact of Western culture and not capturing the diversity of students' needs and objectives (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Item 19 deals with the different culture of learning that learners in Asian countries bring to classes about allocating specific time to learning in classes (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010). Item 25 treats transformation of knowledge in experiential learning rather than transmission of knowledge which is dominant in Asian culture (Hird, 1995). In general, in line with this factor's items, it can be argued that the cultural difference between the Iranian context and the Western context wherein for the first time TBI emerged and spread around the world is a big barrier in the implementation of TBI. In fact, it may be hypothesized that these cultural differences have led to different attitudes in English teachers in the two opposite poles of the world toward the use of TBI. Hence, it is clear that some form of resistance or negotiation arise, when teachers cannot find a new innovation or pedagogy compatible with their beliefs and attitudes (Young & Lee, 1987, as cited in Carless, 2003). In line with this argumentation, Karavas-Doukas (1995) found out that in Greece the implementation of communicative teaching pedagogy immensely diminished owing to the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers which were not compatible with the basic tenets of this new innovation. Further, to back up more these findings, Clark et al. (1999) came to this understanding that overall teachers commented tentatively on the positive aspects of TBI since they thought it is not in perfect harmony with their cultural beliefs, though they were beginning to develop more positive sentiments toward TBI after trying it out and observing its advantages.

According to the findings, it can be argued that 'cultural difference' in the Iranian learning contexts, which indicates being constrained by larger educational and institutional obligations, is quite different from the goals of BANA (Britain, Australia, and North America) contexts, which mainly focuses on work reasons for learning English due to academic or professional purposes (Holliday, 1994). This sort of mismatch in cultural objectives between Asian and Western purposes of learning English have been reiterated in the literature to decide on a context-sensitive version of TBI rather than its precursor in West (Carless, 2007; Ji, 2017; Tan, 2016). Moreover, although the Iranian English language teachers in schools and institutes found assessing learners' performance through TBI assessments complex and demanding, as well as they came up with huge cultural difference in using TBI, they conceived TBI more or less as an effective approach with practical advantages that can empower English learners for meaningful and real life communications. Hence, this factor along with the former one to some extent accord with Ji (2017) that identified a number of mismatches between TBI implementation and the contextual differences that lead to rejecting this approach as an indecent way of English instruction by teachers unless a variety of revisions be applied to make TBI a context-sensitive approach.

The third factor, known as 'efficacy of the method', attempts to show how effective or ineffective TBI can be in Iranian language schools and contains 8 items. Items 4, 16, and 30, in general, refer to the overall effectiveness of TBI method in Iran. Items 7, 14, and 27 concern with the effectiveness of grammar in TBI. And, Items 6 and 8 deal with the psychological effectiveness of TBI. The reason for these findings revealing that from the Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives TBI cannot bring a high level of efficacy into their classes can be associated with a misunderstanding of the principles and procedures of TBI on the part of the teachers. That is, it can be argued that the misconceptions of TBI and how much it can be efficient to facilitate L2 learning might have inhibited the Iranian EFL teachers to implement it in their classes. These findings accord with Li's (1998) study's results reporting that misconceptions about the nature of communicative approaches to language teaching were a barrier to their implementation. Moreover, the findings lend credence to the study of Clark, Lo, Hui, Kam, Carless, and Wong (1999) provided robust similar evidence that Hong Kong teachers had unclear conceptions about task-based teaching and learning, and this hindered its implementation.

6. Conclusion and Implications

As discussed throughout the above sections, the present study set out to construct and validate a questionnaire in relation to the obstacles inhibiting the EFL teachers in using TBI, in one hand, and to unveil the EFL teachers'

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perspectives regarding these obstacles, on the other hand. To achieve the goals, in accordance with the literature, a questionnaire consisting 20 items were developed, piloted, and distributed among 120 EFL teachers. The results of running CFA yielded three sub-factors, namely *lack of appropriate assessment methods*, *cultural difference*, and *effectiveness of the method*. In fact, the findings disclosed that the inability of the EFL teachers to implement TBI lies in the fact that they have perceived the assessment methods a little bit complex and demanding, they have found the cultural differences huge, and they have had hesitation regarding the efficiency of TBI in teaching and learning English in the Iranian context.

In line with the findings, some educational implications can be suggested. For example, it is recommended that teacher training courses should give more attention to TBI and provide insights on how it can be implemented in real classes to make the way for English learner to achieve more promising results. The reason for this recommendation lies in the undeniable fact that, as Richards (2011) notes, teachers play the most crucial role in implementing successfully curriculum contents. He adds more that "exceptional teachers can often compensate for the poor-quality resources and materials they have to work from. But inadequately trained teachers may not be able to make effective use of teaching materials no matter how well they are designed" (p. 99). In addition, as one of the fundamental reasons for the inefficacy of English learning and teaching in the Iranian context is associated with the obsolete approaches administered by EFL teachers, they are invited to embrace TBI with open arms and embark on doing it in their classes. By trying TBI out in their classes, with the cross of the time, they may see the advantages that this new innovation can bring on the board for them. Further, in accordance with the findings, it can be suggested that the teachers work on the cultural and attitude barriers impeding the L2 learners to take advantage of TBI and propose 'Situated Task-Based' approaches to promote a context-sensitive version of TBI in EFL settings. In fact, it is clear that when novel pedagogies such as TBI are tailored to the local contextual conditions and the needs and wants of the target learners, the different stakeholders, most particularly the learners, can benefit from its results (Carless, 2003).

Here, in light of the limitations imposed on the current study, some suggestions for further research are presented. The present study only considered language teachers in schools and institutes. Therefore, the application of the scale in other contexts may clear up the construct better. For example, more studies are called out to investigate if TBI is implemented in the Iranian universities. If yes, from the perceptions of the either university professors or universities students, which factors do facilitate or impede its implementation? In addition, as the researchers applied correlational statistics to test the relations between factors, further studies can utilize experimental approaches with trained teachers with reference to TBI principles and procedures to examine the effect of that treatment on the efficacy of TBI in language classes. Finally, since the current study was a quantitative research, further qualitative studies can be formulated and run to shed light on the howness aspect of the issue

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Appendix A (First Questionnaire)

Project on detecting teachers' obstacles in implementing Task-Based Instruction

Dear colleagues

Gender Male Female

Years of experience 0-5 5-10 10-20

	Statement	Completely disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Completely
1	How much are you familiar with TBI in general?					
۲	Do you think you have received sufficient training for teaching TBI in your classes?					
۳	Do think TBI has been designed for ESL context and not suitable for EFL context?					
۴	Do you think TBI is less effective for the methodical teaching of a new language in Iran compared with other language methodologies?					
۵	Test items in TBI are not really assessing students' language competence.					
۶	TBI is not applicable in large classes.					
۷	TBI underestimates and somehow ignores grammar.					
۸	TBI classes are more active and have more fun.					
۹	TBI tasks in comparison with traditional language drills are more thought-provoking and improves students' confidence.					
۱۰	Do you think language specialists had better redefine "task" in the Iranian context to make it more applicable to classroom teachers?					
۱۱	How much should English teachers plan to keep the balance between focus on communication and focus on form?					
۱۲	TBI stimulates language learning and enhances skills necessary for outside the classroom interactions.					
۱۳	TBI does not impose specified language items on students instead it helps them to focus on the meaning of the task to be completed.					
۱۴	In TBI, when designing task sequence for a focus on form activity, the most effective position is the end.					
۱۵	To what extent do you think TBI is a fully developed approach for teaching all language skills?					
۱۶	TBI provides an artificial contexts for students due to the concentration on language practice rather than the students' needs.					
۱۷	Due to the task structure, students would get used to taking shortcuts in their language use and not fully involved in language learning.					

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۱۸	Do you think tasks work well with all personality types or just risk-takers in the classroom?					
۱۹	How often do you try to integrate language skills in the classroom?					
۲۰	Tasks are designed to prepare students for the communication goals outside the class, which is why teachers are confused how to assess students.					
۲۱	TBI introduces authentic texts into the learning situations.					
۲۲	TBI involves students in their own experiences.					
۲۳	Do you think that an explicit focus on grammar should be part of language learning in TBI?					
۲۴	TBI is culturally designed for western culture, not suitable for our context.					
۲۵	TBI is not comprehensible, let alone being used as a practical classroom teaching method.					
۲۶	How much do you think the language students' use in doing tasks may be unfamiliar linguistically for teachers in assessing task performance?					
۲۷	How often do you try to integrate language skills in the classroom?					
۲۸	How much do you think time constraints might inhibit teachers from TBI tasks?					
۲۹	To what extent do you think TBI develops fluency at the expense of accuracy and relies on lexis?					
۳۰	To what extent do you think TBI is a fully developed approach for teaching all language skills?					

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Appendix B (Revised Questionnaire)

Project on detecting teachers' obstacles in implementing Task-Based Instruction

	Statement	Completely disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Completely agree
1	Do you think TBI is less effective for the methodical teaching of a new language in Iran compared with other language methodologies?					
2	Test items in TBI are not really assessing students' language competence.					
3	TBI is not applicable in large classes.					
4	TBI underestimates and somehow ignores grammar.					
5	TBI classes are more active and have more fun.					
6	TBI stimulates language learning and enhances skills necessary for outside the classroom interactions.					
7	In TBI, when designing task sequence for a focus on form activity, the most effective position is the end.					
8	TBI provides an artificial contexts for students due to the concentration on language practice rather than the students' needs.					
9	Tasks are designed to prepare students for the communication goals outside the class, which is why teachers are confused how to assess students.					
10	TBI involves students in their own experiences.					
11	Do you think that an explicit focus on grammar should be part of language learning in TBI?					
12	TBI is culturally designed for western culture, not suitable for our context.					
13	TBI is not comprehensible, let alone being used as a practical classroom teaching method.					
14	How much do you think the language students' use in doing tasks may be unfamiliar linguistically for teachers in assessing task performance?					
15	How often do you try to integrate language skills in the classroom?					
16	How much do you think time constraints might inhibit teachers from TBI tasks?					
17	To what extent do you think TBI develops fluency at the expense of accuracy and relies on lexis?					
18	To what extent do you think TBI is a fully developed approach for teaching all language skills?					

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