



MONASH University

IMPLEMENTING

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT)

IN ENGLISH CLASSES OF CHINESE UNIVERSITIES:

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Teachers and researchers in China have shown persistent enthusiasm in task-based language teaching (TBLT). However, many researchers have found that TBLT rationales are incompatible with EFL teaching in China and Chinese students have challenges in their task-based learning. Therefore, there is a need for further research to be conducted to investigate disjunctions between the principles of TBLT and the Chinese sociocultural context so that TBLT practices could be implemented in a more culturally appropriate manner in China.

To fulfil this aim, the study employed a design-based research approach that adopts a problem-solving and iterative procedure to reveal the underlying sociocultural factors that cause Chinese students' challenges and then develop strategies to address these challenges. In order to examine the culturally appropriate TBLT practices, the study investigated Chinese students' learning and development in four learning aspects: grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategies (LLS) and willingness to communicate (WTC). The study consisted of three iterative cycles: Literature review, Intervention I and Intervention II.

The literature review cycle, Cycle 1, primarily developed a conceptual framework underpinned by sociocultural theory. It suggested the consideration of students' current attitudes and practices, their previous experiences and Chinese sociocultural context in the implementation of TBLT. The literature review in Cycle 1 also revealed the need to integrate Chinese students' development in the four learning aspects as the ultimate goal of culturally appropriate TBLT practices. Based on this conceptual framework, principles to adjust TBLT practices in Intervention 1 were proposed.

The two intervention cycles, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, were conducted with 122 university students in one Chinese university. In the actual University English classes in one semester,

the researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices to facilitate the students' development of the four learning aspects. Both quantitative and qualitative data revealed the positive impact of the adjusted TBLT practices. However, a number of local institutional and cultural constraints, such as the teacher-centred, language-focused and memorisation-based teaching approaches, grammar-based examination system, limited opportunities to communicate in English, Chinese assumption of learning, and the collectivist culture, all hindered this teaching methodology. At the end of Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, therefore, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices to suit the Chinese context. Major adjustments included: tasks were designed as communicating about grammar and task-based examination preparation, TBLT added teachers' participation, training of students' corrective feedback, fundamental grammatical input and students' reflective journal about LLS usage, assigned students with clear division of labour in group-based tasks, provided strategy training about the limited used strategies, as well as required the students to compose groups/pairs across proficiency levels.

Findings proposed that cross-cultural pedagogy developers need to consider both the imported pedagogic rationales and the local context. Furthermore, the study provided a practical model by integrating sociocultural context, pedagogic rationales and learning aspects along the pedagogic innovation to assist students' comprehensive development in learning. Finally, the study also contributed to the research methodology during the conduct of the design-based research.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

Print Name: Yi Ji

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English Language Teaching
LLS	Language Learning Strategy
LREs	Language Related Episodes
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

Chapter 1 Introduction

The field of second language acquisition research has witnessed increasing interest in task-based language teaching (TBLT) (e.g., Bygate, Skehan & Swan, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Long & Crookes, 1992; Robinson, 2001). Furthermore, this pedagogy is gaining momentum in the domain of language teaching (e.g. Ellis, 2009; Tran-Dang, 2017). TBLT provides opportunities for learners to improve language proficiency by participating in certain “goal-oriented and meaning-centred” tasks (Rodríguez-Bonces & Rodríguez-Bonces, 2010, p. 166) because it applies a pedagogic task as the carrier and the “unit of teaching” (Ellis, 2003, p. 27), referring to “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (Nunan, 1989, p. 4). Advocating Nunan’s (1989) idea that learners comprehend, manipulate, produce or interact in the target language in pedagogical tasks, Willis (1996) proposed a sequence of this teaching methodology, including pre-task, task cycle, and language focus.

Supported by the definitions and general procedures of TBLT, researchers (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 1999; Robinson, 2001; Storch, 2001) further explored the actual task-based classes and survey what influences students’ task performance in TBLT. Among all the factors, the current study reviewed task type, pre-task planning, post-task activities, learners’ language proficiency, and learners’ participation in order to help the researcher establish a comprehensive outline about what to consider when implementing TBLT in language classes.

In investigating the task-based classes, researchers also suggest that TBLT can (1) *enhance learners’ language mastery* (e.g., Dobao, 2014; Révész, 2011; Lambert & Engler, 2005; Masoud & Shirin, 2013; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007; Sasayama, 2016), (2) *develop students’ learning methods in language learning* (e.g., Chang, 2009; Huang, 2016; Shang, 2010), and (3) *develop students’ ability in collaborative activities* (e.g., Gilabert, Barón & Llanes, 2009; Maria & Ainara, 2016).

Recognising the benefits of TBLT on language learners’ development, school teachers and education researchers in China have been persistent in demonstrating enthusiasm for adopting TBLT since it was first introduced into China in the late 1990s (Xia & Hung, 1998). The Ministry of Education in the People’s Republic of China issued the experimental edition of the Chinese National English Curriculum Standards, revealing the official support for the

implementation of TBLT in Chinese primary and secondary schools (The Ministry of Education in People's Republic of China, 2011). In China's higher education system, enthusiasm for TBLT has also been flourishing, supported by a new English language curriculum, introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2000, which has popularised the use of TBLT. This officially issued curriculum states that the teaching rationales comply with those of TBLT, further stimulating Chinese teachers' and researchers' interest in investigating and applying TBLT. Specifically, the curriculum confirms that the ultimate teaching aim of EFL classes is to develop students' learning strategies, autonomous learning, and intercultural competence (Luo & Xing, 2015). To fulfil these goals, a methodology is proposed in the curriculum that emphasises the learners' central position, authentic language use, and focus on form, all of which are in line with the pedagogical rationales of TBLT, and thus further encourages the popularity of TBLT around the country.

Nevertheless, some researchers have reported that both Chinese teachers and students meet challenges in teaching and learning in TBLT (Huang, 2016; Yan, 2015; Yuan, 2016; Zheng & Borg, 2014). The primary factor contributing to such a dilemma has, in general, been that the western-based TBLT, both theoretically and practically, conflicts with the Chinese culture of teaching and learning. Specifically, EFL teaching in China is characterised as teacher-centred, textbook-directed and memorisation-based (Zheng & Borg, 2014). This teaching culture is often incompatible with TBLT rationales, which are rooted in Western culture (Littlewood, 2007), and which emphasise students' participation (Ellis, 2003), authentic language use (Willis, 1996), and communicative interaction (Nunan, 1989). Regarding traditional English teaching approaches in China, the grammar-based examination system determines the grammar-translation focused, knowledge-based, memorisation-based, and teacher-centred teaching approaches, which show their disjunctions with TBLT. Regarding Chinese students' learning preferences, Chinese assumptions about learning, Chinese people's emphasis on teacher's authority and collectivist culture, all demotivate some Chinese students to welcome the western-based TBLT enthusiastically.

These disjunctions between TBLT rationales and Chinese cultural contexts are evidenced in studies that show Chinese students' challenges in their language development with TBLT. Previous researchers have investigated Chinese students' development in grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategies, and willingness to communicate. In the Chinese educational context, however, the above-mentioned institutional and cultural factors

create a tension with both the TBLT rationales and the developmental requirements for these learning aspects. The Chinese contexts thus impede Chinese students' language learning in TBLT and weaken the benefits of TBLT on students' development in these learning aspects. Therefore, there is a need to examine the effectiveness of this teaching approach in China and to determine how to make it culturally appropriate in the Chinese learning contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, language creates the link between humans and society by mediating both humans' social and mental activities, and it mediates human behaviours in sociocultural contexts (Lantolf, 2000). Students' language learning, therefore, should be positioned within the theoretical framework that imbeds individuals' language learning within social relations and historical time (Dong & Marginson, 2013). This requires that teachers simultaneously infuse the sociocultural contexts into pedagogical innovation (Pham, 2011) and consider students' potentially diverse perceptions and responses to the pedagogies (Barnes et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2018). Therefore, regarding the implementation of TBLT in Chinese classes, TBLT practitioners need to adjust the TBLT practices to suit the Chinese educational and cultural contexts and to facilitate Chinese students' overall development.

From a practical perspective, it would be valuable if Chinese educators were to begin their implementation of TBLT with investigating the disjunctions between TBLT rationales and the Chinese sociocultural context. These mismatches can in fact help researchers analyse the challenges Chinese students meet in their language learning within TBLT. Moreover, strategies to match, or to correct for, these disjunctions need to be developed so that TBLT can be augmented so as to become culturally appropriate in Chinese classrooms. Previous researchers have indeed proposed some strategies in this field (Carless, 2004, 2015; Littlewood, 2007); unfortunately, however, there have been so far few empirical studies conducted in actual classroom settings to test the cultural appropriateness of these strategies.

1.1. Researcher's Profile and Motivation

In order to contribute to the field of English language learning and teaching and to fill existing research gaps, I began exploring TBLT research during my third year as an EFL teacher at a local university in my hometown, which is a northern capital city in China. English has been offered as a compulsory unit to undergraduate students of all majors, but a majority of students lack enthusiasm for learning this unit. The reasons lie in that, firstly, students in our university are from various regions of the country, and nearly half are from

rural communities and have not experienced adequate English exposure in their previous school lives. Secondly, few of these students have a need to go to large, metropolitan cities or to travel abroad, so English seems relatively unnecessary for them.

Frustrated by this condition in English education, and as a young, ambitious teacher in my first year of teaching, I determined to create changes. I prepared myself to employ an inspiring teaching methodology in order to make a more inviting and stimulating English class. I reread my postgraduate stage course book, “Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching”, and I chose TBLT as my major tool. This was also attributed to my previous teaching experience in some training schools, which proved to me the significance and usefulness of this method in actual teaching contexts. I integrated TBLT, the contents of the textbooks, as well as elements of students’ daily lives, into specific tasks.

When I first utilised this approach, it was very successful. Most students loved this teaching approach, and their English proficiency improved. However, in the later semesters, yet with the same students, I found that some unforeseen problems had arisen. I then made some adjustments in terms of the task design, task explanation, supervision, and control in classes as well as implementing post-task evaluation and reflection.

At the same time, I felt, from my perspective as a teacher, that these problems might be frequently experienced in most university English classes in China. I, therefore, conducted a survey to investigate perceptions towards TBLT among 150 Chinese students and 20 Chinese teachers from different regions in China. The results revealed various problems in the implementation of TBLT. For instance, the students found this method interesting and beneficial but, simultaneously, time-consuming, and they felt increasingly reluctant to engage in relevant learning activities because they thought TBLT could not help them much in their examinations. The teachers (especially those who had not received professional training in TBLT) did not understand the procedures of TBLT clearly, leading to their ineffective implementation of the approaches. Apart from some personal reasons that impeded the teachers and students in the implementation of TBLT in a positive manner, their responses showed the obvious impact of the sociocultural context in China on their reluctance to participate in and the inefficient application of TBLT.

This experience, therefore, encouraged me to pursue research on how to design TBLT in a culturally appropriate manner that could be accepted by local teachers and students in China.

Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate how Chinese sociocultural factors contradicted TBLT rationales and influenced Chinese students' language learning in TBLT. Moreover, another goal of the study was to develop pedagogical practices to overcome these discrepancies and to be culturally appropriate in Chinese classes. Moreover, in pursuit of the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, this research investigated their impact on Chinese students' language learning.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Guided by the researcher's own experiences and personal lines of inquiry, the study aims to investigate culturally appropriate TBLT practices to facilitate Chinese students' language learning; thus, it has both theoretical and practical significance.

This study is significant in that it speaks to the gaps in the literature on the implementation of TBLT in China. Firstly, some previous studies merely reveal the benefits that Chinese students achieve in TBLT, but they have missed the consideration of real world challenges. The current study, by contrast, focuses primarily on the students' difficulties in learning with TBLT, and further analyses how disjunctions between TBLT rationales and Chinese cultural contexts cause these difficulties. Secondly, although some researchers have proposed strategies to address the disjunctions between TBLT and Chinese cultural contexts, few studies have reported the empirical application of these strategies in actual classes. The current study can fill this gap by examining the actual impact of the adjusted TBLT practices on Chinese students' language learning.

Secondly, in the process of investigating the implementation of TBLT in Chinese classes, the current study has a shift in focus of attention from teachers and teaching to students and learning. In terms of students, this study offers insights into what they can do to improve performance of learning tasks so as to improve their English learning. This is important because studies on the implementation of TBLT in China have mainly emphasised the potential problems from the teachers' perspectives, whereas the students' perspectives on TBLT have not been well documented.

Moreover, this study meets the current demand for testing the suitability of TBLT for non-Western, Asian context (Littlewood, 2007). Although Western teaching and learning practices are readily available in China, there is not sufficient evidence to prove the

suitability and applicability of these pedagogical practices in the specific sociocultural context of China. Unfortunately, many Chinese teachers are adopting such borrowed practices without considering their appropriateness for diverse instructional and cultural contexts (Carless, 2007; Pham, 2010). Therefore, guidelines for localising and adjusting the western-based pedagogies within Chinese cultural contexts should be promoted among Chinese teachers. By developing culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, findings of this study have the potential to instruct Chinese teachers about appropriate applications of Western pedagogies.

Finally, in addition to assisting Chinese teachers, the strategies formulated in this study are potentially significant to teachers in other countries. For example, because the study links TBLT rationales directly to its practices by developing concrete instructional strategies which are empirically tested in classroom settings, these strategies thus provide more practical suggestions in addition to the theoretical teaching rationales for teachers in other Asian countries. Based on these strategies, teachers in non-Western cultural contexts can achieve more applicable understanding about TBLT. Simultaneously, the study establishes the framework about localised adaptation of TBLT in the context of Chinese educational culture, and strategies developed in this study can thus guide teachers in other Asian countries to localise TBLT or even other western-based pedagogies in their own sociocultural context. For teachers in English-speaking countries, data collected in this study about Chinese students' task performance can help them establish a holistic and impartial perspective on about Chinese students. Because an increasing number of Asian students are studying in foreign educational institutions, it is thus important for Western teachers to explore strategies to enhance their learning.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on a critical review of the literature about the implementation of TBLT in China, the current study aimed to investigate:

1. The impact of TBLT on Chinese students' English learning in English classes of Chinese universities; and
2. How TBLT could be designed in a culturally appropriate manner in Chinese university classes.

To achieve these aims, the study employed a design-based research approach because it applies iterative cycles to address the teaching and learning problems and thus bridges the gap between academic research and practical lessons. Specifically, Cycle 1 reviewed the existing literature about the adjusted TBLT practices to address Chinese EFL learners' challenges in task-based learning. Cycle 2, the first intervention cycle, implemented these practices in actual EFL classes in one Chinese university. Questionnaire responses and sample work from 122 Chinese students, as well as data collected from 10 focused participants' interviews, guided journals and audio-taped task performance helped the researcher pinpoint the students' challenges in their learning in TBLT. At the end of Cycle 2, the researcher proposed adjustments for TBLT practices to address these newly explored challenges. Similarly, in Cycle 3, the second intervention cycle, the researcher again implemented the adjusted TBLT practices in classes and further adjusted TBLT practices based on data analysis in this cycle.

Therefore, research questions below guided these research cycles:

1. How does TBLT impact Chinese university students' English learning (i.e., shown by their perceptions, their English proficiency, their learning strategies)?
2. What are culturally appropriate TBLT practices in English classes of Chinese universities?
 - 2.1 What are the social and cultural factors in English classes of Chinese universities that influence the implementation of TBLT?
 - 2.2 How can TBLT practices be adjusted to better suit the sociocultural context of English classes in Chinese universities?

1.4. Overview of thesis structure

Chapter 1: Introduction

Outlines the context and background of the study.

Outlines the study's aims, theoretical framework, methodological decisions, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Explains the benefits of TBLT, definition and types of tasks, procedures and influential factors of TBLT.

Provides an overview of implementation of TBLT in China.

Discusses four aspects of Chinese students' learning influenced by the implementation of TBLT.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks to Implement TBLT in the English Classes of Chinese Universities

Explains the theoretical framework that applied two concepts of sociocultural theory.

Explains the conceptual framework that guides the current research.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Presents the research design, research site, target unit and participants.

Describes the data collection process and data analysis.

Discusses ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Cycle 2: Intervention 1

Reports how the adjusted TBLT practices impacted Chinese students' grammar learning, learner autonomy, LLS and WTC in Cycle 2.

Examines the problems of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 and their sociocultural reasons.

Addresses the challenges by further adjustments of TBLT practices.

Chapter 6: Cycle 3: Intervention 2

Reports how the adjusted TBLT practices impacted Chinese students' grammar learning, learner autonomy, LLS and WTC in Cycle 3.

Examines the problems of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3 and their sociocultural reasons.

Addresses the challenges by further adjustments of TBLT practices.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Discusses the impact of TBLT on Chinese students' learning.

Discusses the sociocultural factors influencing student learning in TBLT.

Discusses the socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Provides a summary of the findings.

Discusses the Chinese students' learning and localised adaptation of western pedagogies in China from a sociocultural perspective.

Discusses theoretical, practical and methodological contributions of the study.

Discusses methodological limitations of the study.

Suggests future research directions.

PART ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The current study aimed to explore the pedagogic practices of TBLT that are culturally appropriate in the English classes of Chinese universities. The purpose of the literature review in this chapter, therefore, is to provide further clarification of TBLT for this study through an overview of the theoretical understanding and practical implementation of TBLT. This chapter has four main sections. Section One commences with an introduction to TBLT. This section reports the benefits of TBLT, the definition of TBLT, the types of the teaching unit of TBLT, namely, tasks, the procedures of TBLT, and the factors influencing learners' performance in TBLT. This summary helps the researcher better understand and implement TBLT in the later interventions. Section Two analyses the implementation of TBLT in China. The analysis compares the mismatches between the teaching and learning traditions in China and the rationales of TBLT, and focuses on the problems facing Chinese teachers and students when they implement TBLT in China. This analysis helps the researcher design and implement the adjustments in the later intervention to address these problems. Section Three further investigates the implementation of TBLT in China by reviewing four learning aspects. The review reveals the significance of these learning aspects, and displays the challenges that Chinese students meet due to the Chinese context, and ends with the analysis about how to address these challenges by applying TBLT. This review helps establish a comprehensive outline about the implementation of TBLT in China to facilitate Chinese students' development in the four specific learning aspects. This review also constitutes the first cycle of design-based research in this study, as it consists of the design of culturally appropriate TBLT practices based on suggestions of previous studies in the literature review. This design will be elaborated in Chapter 4. Section Four provides the conclusion of the chapter.

2.1. TBLT

TBLT was first witnessed in a language teaching project by Prabhu in 1979, in which students were asked to learn language by working on some communicative tasks (Prabhu, 1987). TBLT thus refers to a type of language teaching approach which takes pedagogic tasks as the carrier, and emphasises “purposeful and functional language use” (Ellis, 2009, p.222). Learners improve their language proficiency by participating in some “goal-oriented and meaning-centred” tasks (Rodríguez-Bonces & Rodríguez-Bonces, 2010, p.166).

2.1.1. Benefits of TBLT

As researchers explored the actual implementation of TBLT in language classes, they have confirmed the considerable benefits TBLT have regarding students' language learning. In general, previous researchers have grouped these benefits into three main areas: (1) enhancing students' language mastery, (2) developing students' learning methods in their language learning, and (3) developing students' ability in collaborative activities.

First, TBLT can develop students' language mastery as it requires learners to transfer their language competence obtained in one task into some other tasks (Benson, 2015; Takahashi, 1996). Peters (2005) generally highlights that students tend to do better when they set a task. To be specific, TBLT has been found to have made contributions to improving learners' language competence in various areas: LREs (Kim, 2011; Kim & Taguchi, 2015; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Dobao, 2014), meaning negotiation which refers to learners' attempt to resolve a communication problem (Slimani - Rolls, 2005), language fluency, complexity and accuracy (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1997; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007; Lambert & Engler, 2005; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Masoud & Shirin, 2013; R é v é s z, 2011; Sasayama, 2016; Taguchi, 2007), and pragmatic competence (i.e., the ability to understand situational characteristics and to use language according to the situation) (Gilabert & Bar ó n, 2013) respectively.

Second, TBLT has been found to contribute to the development of students' learning methods in relation to their usage of language. For example, TBLT could help learners adjust their language learning strategies. Ortega (2005) reported the participants applied cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies in their task performance. Furthermore, students are able to adjust their learning strategy according to the change in task conditions (Chang, 2009). In addition, Huang (2016) also proposed that TBLT could strengthen learners' study autonomy. This was evidenced by their increased time spent on preparation for tasks. In the same study conducted by Huang (2016), students were also found to have better learning motivation when being engaged in TBLT. Shang's (2010) study also indicated that students in TBLT spent much longer time studying autonomously online.

In addition, several studies have indicated that TBLT brings some collaborative activities between the language learners. Gilabert, Bar ó n and Llanes (2009) found in their study that learners generated more interactional moves (i.e., learners' attempt to promote their interaction by confirmation, clarification and repair) when performing tasks. In detail, when

the participants carried out the tasks, they voluntarily participated in more interactions with other group members. Besides, Watanabe and Swain (2008) asserted apart from mutual interactions, peer assistance among the participants inside learning groups also existed in their task performance. In collaborative patterns of interaction, learners were more likely to achieve higher post-test scores. Maria and Ainara (2016) found that students could also adjust their collaborative patterns when performing different tasks.

As such, previous studies have examined the benefits of TBLT regarding students' language learning. This lays the foundation of the current study that aims to explore the benefits of TBLT in the actual EFL classes in Chinese universities.

2.1.2. Definition of a Task

In the TBLT approach, teachers treat pedagogic tasks as “units of teaching” and design the whole courses around the tasks (Ellis, 2003, p.27). The definition of a task therefore became the foundation for the intervention of TBLT in the current study. Defining a task in TBLT has been the subject of much debate for researchers. A task has been defined from different perspectives by researchers. Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001) offered a more pedagogically oriented definition: a task is “an activity which requires learners to use language, with an emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (p.11). Nunan (1989) defined a task by focusing on its implementation process as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (p.4). Ellis (2003), by indicating the learning priority in the TBLT approach, gave the interpretation of a task as “a work-plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources” (p.16). Although these definitions differ according to the purposes for which tasks are used, all these definitions imply that tasks involve communicative language use in which the user's attention is focused on meaning and content of the language rather than linguistic structures. Since the current study aimed to investigate how TBLT could be adjusted to work in Chinese classrooms in a culturally appropriate manner, the study focused on examining the actual implementation process of

TBLT. For this reason, the definition of a task proposed by Nunan (1989) was used to frame this study.

2.1.3. Types of Tasks

Tasks can be classified from different perspectives. Regarding the content of tasks, Willis (1996) classified tasks into listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences and creative tasks. Regarding the cognitive procedures, Prabhu (1987) identified three kinds of tasks: information-gap task which emphasises the exchange of information among participants, opinion-gap task which emphasises the idea that learners need to give their personal preferences, feelings, or attitudes, and reasoning-gap task that requires learners to derive some new information by inferring it from information they had been given.

There are two other classification methods of tasks including “closed task and open task” (Wills, 1996) and “unfocused task and focused task” (Ellis, 2003). Wills (1996) defined a closed task as highly structured with very specific goals, while an open task as more loosely structured, with a less specific goal. Ellis (2003) explained that unfocused task might predispose learners to choose from a range of forms without specifying certain forms in mind, while the focused task aimed to induce learners to process some particular linguistic features. In this empirical study where the researcher implemented and adjusted TBLT in Chinese classes, tasks of all these categories were applied.

2.1.4. Procedures of TBLT

According to Nunan (1989), learners comprehend, manipulate, produce or interact in the target language in pedagogic tasks. Advocating this idea, Willis (1996) proposed a sequence of this teaching methodology, including pre-task, task cycle and language focus. In the first phase, pre-task stage, language learners should be explained and motivated to perform the task and then be exposed to comprehensible language input. Learners can comprehend the goals, the strategies and the procedures of the task performance. Willis’s first phase is in line with Nunan’s (1989) description of “comprehending”. When it comes to the second phase, task cycle, learners are asked to perform the task by individuals or in groups. The language learners can either utilise their own language strategies to handle the problems or depend on the interaction with their peers or teachers to complete the task. Learners can be expected to

deliver their oral output in front of the class in a presentation as a demonstration of their task performance, which can be regarded as a credible and effective procedure to measure learners' improvement in their language proficiency. This phase is consistent with Nunan's (1989) description of "producing or interacting". In the final phase, namely the language focus, learners' performance can be assessed via the teacher's feedback. Teachers' feedback to address learners' uncertainties and to help them correct certain errors in their language use can be typical and efficient ways in this phase. This phase fulfills Nunan's (1989) requirement of "manipulating".

Like in the western classrooms where TBLT is originally proposed and designed, when TBLT is implemented in English classes of Chinese universities, most Chinese teachers follow these procedures to apply TBLT in the Chinese context (Butler, 2011; Zheng & Borg, 2014). However, little has been known about how local teachers have localized this western-based pedagogy (Littlewood, 2007) to address Chinese EFL learners' special requirements. This is one of the gaps in the literature that the current research attempted to fill in.

2.1.5. Factors Influencing Learners' Performance in TBLT

Although researchers have proposed the general procedures of TBLT, the complex teaching and learning process could influence teachers' detailed design and implementation of TBLT. Furthermore, learners themselves also exert their own influence to their language learning in TBLT. Therefore, some researchers (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 1999; Robinson, 2001; Storch, 2001) have further surveyed the actual task-based classes to investigate what influences students' task performance in TBLT.

The factors that influence learners' task performance can be divided into three categories, task design factors (task type), task implementation factors (pre-task planning and post-task activities) and learner factors (learners' language proficiency and learners' participation). Among these factors, the first two categories have been reported from teachers' perspective because the teacher designs and implements the task in the TBLT approach, whereas the learner factors involve learners' actual perception and behaviours when working with TBLT.

2.1.5.1. Task Design Factor: Task Type

Previous research has found evidence about the influence of task type on the success of TBLT. Skehan and Foster who have been known as prominent teacher-researchers in this field have conducted three studies (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1997) to investigate the effects of task type on learners' fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Compared with personal information exchange task, narrative task and decision-making tasks led to learners' more accurate and complex language production (Foster & Skehan, 1996). This was because these two task types required language learners to process new and complex information and thus allowed less attentional resource to language forms. In another study, these researchers found that an unstructured task consisting of unpredictable actions could elicit learners' fluency significantly greater than a structured task that provided a sequence of actions. Furthermore, compared with personal and narrative tasks, decision-making tasks could originate more significant results in learners' accurate, complex and fluent language production (Foster & Skehan, 1999).

Following Skehan and Foster's research framework on language learners' fluency, accuracy and complexity, Gan's (2013) study revealed that compared with an interactive discussion task, a monologic presentation task could generate greater fluency, complexity and accuracy illustrated by fewer errors, longer utterances, greater use of verb phrases and shorter pauses. This was attributed to that students paid fewer attention to language forms in their performance of interactive tasks. Another study (Xu & Ferguson, 2013) showed that the decision-making task led to more complex oral production than the information-exchange task because the selection of language items required by the decision-making task naturally led to more complex language production.

Besides, some other research also investigated learners' interaction modes when working on different task types. Slimani - Rolls (2005) argued that students' use of conversational adjustments in the two-way communication task was indeed significantly higher than in the one-way task and the decision-making task. This was because the two-way task demanded more authentic use of target language, which thus elicited students' more use of modified interaction and meaning negotiation. Similarly, Gilabert, Barón, and Llanes (2009) proposed that the task which required the highest precision in information transfer promoted the most interactional moves in students' task performance.

In terms of the impacts of certain task types on language learners' task performance, it can be generally concluded that different task types with demands of different directions and levels can lead to participants' varying task performance (Gan, 2013). Teachers, therefore, should judiciously select task types which may result in different types of language processing and linguistic features to promote learners' language competence (Foster & Skehan, 1996).

2.1.5.2. Task Implementation Factor: Pre-task Planning

During the task implementation, Foster and Skehan (1999) propose that pre-task planning "can have beneficial effects upon the nature of task performance, consistently leading to greater fluency and complexity and, less dependably and greater accuracy" (p. 215). The effects of pre-task planning on task implementation can be concluded from the research on its source, also called as "participatory structure" (Xu & Ferguson, 2013), foci, time and content. The source of planning compares the teacher-led, group/pair-based and individual planning. The foci of planning include planning towards language and towards content. Time of planning, as it is called, refers to planning with different time span. The content of planning compares the detailed planning with guidance on specific language items and undetailed planning with no guidance.

Foster and Skehan (1999) conducted a study to examine the effects of various sources of planning on students' language performance. The researchers allocated four different sources including teacher-fronted, solitary, group-based planning and no planning to four groups of participants. They found that, for a general conclusion, the teacher-fronted condition produced the most balanced performance in students' language complexity, accuracy and fluency. Another study (Xu & Ferguson, 2013) resembling the study by Foster and Skehan (1999) investigated the difference between three participatory structures in task planning. According to Ellis's (2003, p. 263) definition, participatory structure refers to "the procedures that govern how the teacher's and students' contributions to the performance of the task are organised". Three participatory structures of planning, pair-work planning, individual planning and teacher-led planning were compared in this study. The results, however, were different from the above-mentioned study. Although the teacher-led planning and individual planning led to higher accuracy and complexity respectively, as was found in Foster and Skehan's (1999) study, the differences were not as significant. The most noteworthy difference between these two studies lied in the effect of group-work planning. In the study

by Xu and Ferguson (2013), the pair-work planning elicited greater fluency, rather than no effect at all on fluency, complexity and accuracy as shown in Foster and Skehan's (1999) study. The distinct results account for the subtle difference between pair-work and group-work, where interaction in pair-work planning is more animated, collaborative and meaning-focused because of fewer disturbances from other partners.

In terms of the foci of pre-task planning, different planning foci towards language and towards content did not seem to produce different results in Foster and Skehan's (1999) study. It was suggested that the effects of planning on task performance could not be derived from the planning focus alone, but it could exert an influence in interaction with the planning source on language outcomes, namely, whether the pre-task planning was conducted by students under the guidance of teachers, in groups with other students or by themselves as individuals.

Mehnert (1998) investigated the role of planning time. Participants in four groups were given no planning time, one-minute, five-minute and 10-minutes planning respectively. The results showed that there was a significant difference in both fluency and accuracy between those who planned and those who did not. This indicated the positive effect of task planning. There was, however, a difference in language complexity only between the 10-minute planners and the other three groups, because no-planners, the one-minute planners and the five-minute planners showed no differences in complexity. The study indicated that language learners manipulated their planning time in rather sophisticated ways, which further proved the significance of task planning.

Foster and Skehan's (1996) explored the effects of different content in task planning. The control group received no planning, while the two experimental groups were respectively instructed in an undetailed plan without planning given by the teacher and in a detailed planning with teacher's explanation on syntax, lexis, content and organisation. The results showed a linear relationship between planning and learners' language fluency and complexity. Specifically, the detailed planners showed the most fluent and complex performance.

2.1.5.3. Task Implementation Factor: Post-task Activities

When compared with the pre-task planning, post-task activities lie in a paucity of research (Li, 2010). Li (2010) compared the impacts of different participatory structures and the content of

post-task activities on learners' language performance. In this study, post-task activities led to a better balanced performance of accuracy, complexity and fluency. Specifically, the pair-based post-task activities elicited more syntactically complex production, while the individual post-task activities led to more lexically sophisticated production. In terms of the content, revision (in which learners were required to correct mistakes in their own performance transcripts or to add some better and new expression) had complex effects on accuracy and complexity, with a positive effect on accuracy, whereas a negative effect on complexity. Another study by Foster and Skehan (2013) revealed the results in alignment with Li's (2010) study. Post-task activities had no significant effects on language fluency, but they contributed to a greater accuracy and complexity in learners' performance, because knowledge about a post-task activity might increase learners' cognitive engagement with the linguistic and communicative demands of the task (Foster & Skehan, 2013, p. 268).

2.1.5.4. Learner Factor: Learners' Language Proficiency

In addition to teachers' task design and implementation, language learner factors simultaneously affect their own task performance. The first important learner factor involves learners' language proficiency. Based on VanPatten's model of input processing (1990), Leeson (2004) argued that more proficient learners could process grammatical form better than their less proficient counterparts, considering that a higher proficiency level could extricate learners from the "struggle with processing meaning during communicative exchanges" (p. 59). According to Leeson's (2004) study, compared with learners at lower proficiency levels, more proficient learners produced more language related episodes (LREs) that referred to the linguistic occasions (Swain & Lapkin, 2011) when they attempted to draw attention to L2 form-meaning connections. Furthermore, both higher and lower proficiency learners benefited more from being paired with higher proficiency learners. Similarly, Storch (2001) found that learners' higher level of EFL proficiency led to higher accuracy scores in a writing task. Yule and Macdonald (1990) further examined the correlation between language proficiency and interaction. They suggested appropriate interactive roles given to each member with different proficiency levels could promote a more successful task completion. Their findings revealed that the members with lower proficiency levels in the more dominant role could contribute to more meaning negotiation in the interaction. Watanabe and Swain (2008) examined the perception of language proficiency of the other learners in pair-based task performance. One Japanese ESL learner was studied in regards to her task completion

with one partner whose language proficiency was higher and another partner whose proficiency was lower than her own. The results showed that this participant misperceived both of her partners' proficiency level. This was because the "sharing of ideas" (Watanabe & Swain, 2008, p.127) in the interaction was the key factor that determined her perception of the language proficiency, and the less proficient partner seemed to take the control of the task. Thus, Watanabe and Swain (2008) concluded that the measured proficiency difference did not necessarily affect peer assistance in task performance. Rather, how learners perceived each other's proficiency levels was more significant.

2.1.5.5. Learner Factor: Learners' Participation

Another factor involving learners themselves is their participation into the task performance. In a study conducted by Dörnyei and Kormos (2000), 46 Hungarian EFL learners' recorded performance in two oral argumentative tasks were transcribed for analysis. Learners' willingness to communicate and need for achievement led to their more participation into the tasks, and further contributed to a higher number of both words and turns produced. Storch's (2008) study further examined the impacts of learners' participatory structure on their task performance. The results showed that learners produced more grammatical and lexical items when engaging in pair work rather than completing the task individually. Similarly, Watanabe and Swain (2007) analysed learners' collaborative dialogue produced in a three-stage task involving pair writing, pair comparison and individual writing. Based on the four patterns of pair interaction stated by Storch (2002), namely collaborative pairs, dominant/dominant pairs, dominant/passive pairs and expert/novice pairs, the authors found that when learners engaged in collaborative patterns of interaction where both learners worked together and assisted one another, they were more likely to achieve higher post-test scores.

Based on the literature reviewed above, there are a wide range of factors that could influence language learners' task performance in the actual implementation of TBLT. In the current study, all these factors were investigated in relation to the specific contexts of China's university. This enabled the researcher to identify strategies to make TBLT more acceptable and suitable to Chinese learners.

2.2. Implementation of TBLT in China

Similar to some other Asian countries (Butler, 2011; Littlewood, 2007), China still faces many challenges in implementing TBLT in all levels of English language teaching. Given that the implementation of TBLT in China is a process of “mutual adaptation” (Carless, 2015, p.367) between the pedagogical principles of TBLT and the local context in China, all of these challenges can be accordingly categorised into those generated by the internal factors of teachers and learners, as well as the external factors rooted in the sociocultural context.

By and large, the factors leading to problems in the implementation of TBLT in China consist of some internal factors of teachers and students, as well as some sociocultural factors associated with Chinese culture and institutional context. As the study aimed to explore the socioculturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, only the latter were considered for the following two reasons. Initially, the latter sociocultural factors are characterised by being exclusively specific to China, whereas the former individual factors can be also identified in other countries in the world. These factors which can also occur in any other countries, such as teachers’ deficiency in spoken English (Carless, 2004, 2009; Luo & Gong, 2015; Luo & Xing, 2015; Zhang, 2015), teachers’ misunderstanding of tasks (Cui, 2012; Zheng & Borg, 2014; Zhang, 2015), and students’ low English proficiency (Laurence, 2015; Luo & Xing, 2015; Zheng & Borg, 2014), thus cannot be analysed as any specific Chinese factors. Furthermore, these problems generated by the teacher’s and students’ factors can be solved by the measures taken outside the task-based curriculum, such as teachers’ professional development and pedagogy training (Zheng & Borg, 2014). As this study aimed to design and practise classroom pedagogic approaches to TBLT that are socioculturally appropriate in China, the challenges and strategies unrelated to the TBLT procedures in the classroom settings will not be stated here.

The following section, therefore, shows the sociocultural factors in China influencing the implementation of TBLT in English classes of Chinese universities. This review for each factor has four main aspects. Initially, the review commences with an introduction about the institutional or cultural factors in China, which provides clarification of how the Chinese teachers and students perceive and behave in their EFL teaching and learning. The second aspect thus reports the major features and procedures of EFL teaching and learning in China, which are influenced by the above-mentioned sociocultural factors. The third aspect is a comparative analysis about the disjunctions between TBLT rationales and the Chinese

context. Moreover, the final aspect provides an overview of how these disjunctions trigger the problems facing teachers and students when they implement TBLT in China.

2.2.1. Grammar-based Examination System

One significant institutional factor preventing the implementation of TBLT in China is the examination system. The focus of national English examinations at different levels, such as College Entrance Examination (the university matriculation exam for undergraduate programs), is centred on grammar and language knowledge. Specifically, the major part of English examinations in China is designed in the form of multiple-choice testing formats (Littlewood, 2007), inspecting students' verbal skills in terms of grammatical knowledge usage, vocabulary usage, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. Other parts of the examinations constitute translation and writing, in the form of short-answer questions. All these test questions exclusively emphasise students' accuracy of language production (Carless, 2015).

The language assessment concept underlying these examinations thus supports and generates the grammar-based teaching in the EFL classes in China. The traditional EFL classes in China apply the grammar-translation method as the major teaching method (Carless, 2004), where the entire class is conducted by teachers in students' native language. Teachers explain the sentences by translating sentences from or to the target language. Students learn the target words or grammatical rules initially by rote, and then they practice the language knowledge by doing language drills of translation and grammar exercises. What students are required to learn is the linguistic knowledge of grammar or word usage. Little attention is paid on their communicative competence. Since the examinations are not communicative, the teaching method supporting these examinations is also language-form-focused.

The mismatch between the teaching method applied to meet the examination system in China and the rationales of TBLT is apparent in terms of the learning goals and the teaching method. Initially, the examination system in China focuses on students' accurate language production. By contrast, TBLT emphasises students' communicative competence which allows them to interact freely in English in their real life. In addition, based on the contrary learning goals, the teaching methods in the traditional English classes in China also contradicts TBLT. In the task-based EFL classes, students could acquire skills to use the target language to solve real-life problems by performing the tasks, thus they could develop their language

proficiency by communicating in English. The authentic language usage during students' communicative tasks focuses on both the language forms and meanings of communication, thus simultaneously enhanced students' language accuracy, complexity and fluency (Foster & Skehan, 2013).

The emphasis on grammar-based examinations among Chinese teachers and students instigates some problems in the implementation of TBLT in China. The problems lie in teachers' misunderstanding of TBLT and students' reluctance in their participation into the tasks. Firstly, Chinese teachers who apply TBLT as their teaching method in the English classes are still used to the standard form-focused teaching approach (Chen & Wright, 2017). In their classes, they merely utilise tasks as a communicative supplement exercise to the teacher-fronted teaching. Their moderated teaching method integrates traditional teaching and TBLT, where the first phase of the classes still remains as the traditional teachers' explanation and presentation of language knowledge, and the second phase comprises students' task performance to practice the knowledge imparted in the previous first part of the lessons. Both teachers and students still emphasise the language forms tested in the examinations, and they merely regard tasks as communicative exercises for the language knowledge, no authentic language usage are practised in the tasks, for the communicative competence required in students' real life is never the priority in their teaching and learning of English. Secondly, the firm learning goal to pass the examinations and the insistence on traditional teaching also prevent students' participation into TBLT. Some Chinese students feel reluctant to participate into the task performance (Zheng & Borg, 2014) because they perceive that their participation into the communicative tasks could not benefit them much in their preparation for passing the examinations. Since their major learning goal of English learning is to pass the form-focused and grammar-based examination, they are demotivated to develop their communicative competence for their authentic language usage in the pedagogic tasks.

In summary, the following figure reveals the problem of TBLT regarding its implementation in China generated by the examination system. The grammar-based examination system in China functions as one significant institutional factor, influencing the learning goal and teaching method in the EFL classes in China. The form-focused learning goal and grammar-translation teaching in English classes in China contradicts the rationales of TBLT because TBLT emphasises language learners' communicative competence and utilises

students' authentic language usage as the major teaching method. The mismatches between the Chinese EFL teaching context and TBLT rationales lead to various problems facing teachers and students when they implement TBLT in China. For example, teachers misunderstand the methods of implementing TBLT and students are reluctant to participate into their task performance.

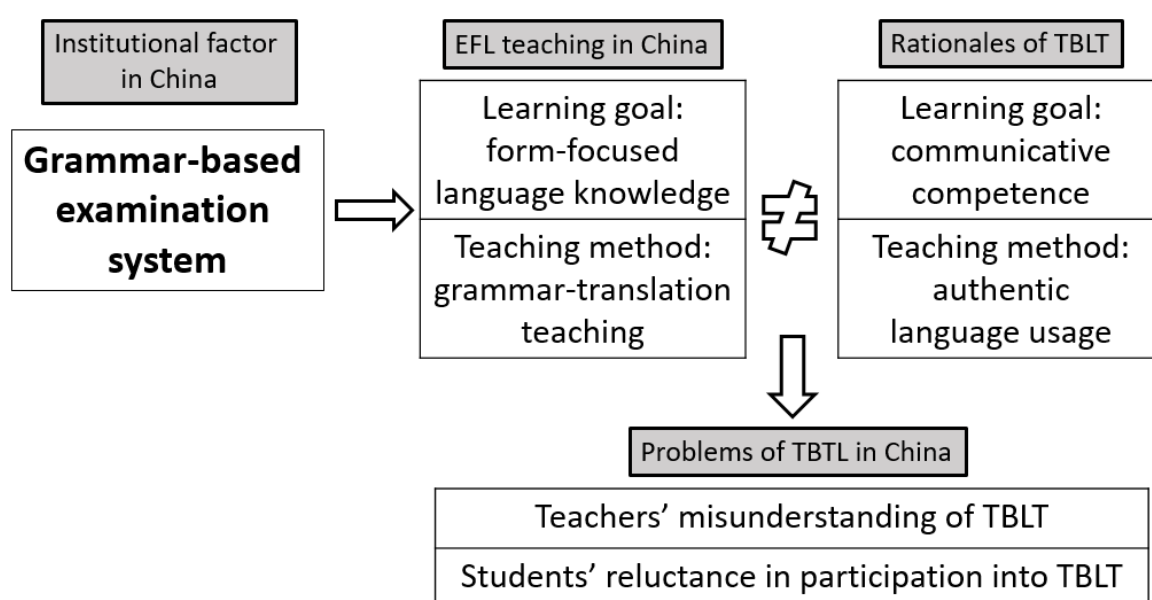


Figure 2.1 Problems caused by the grammar-based examination system

2.2.2. Chinese Assumptions about Learning

The set of “expectations, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, preferences” (Hu, 2002, p. 96) associated with teaching and learning influence both teachers' and students' behaviours in the EFL teaching and learning process. The Chinese assumption about learning is one significant component of the cultural factors influencing the pedagogical intervention in China. Specifically, the traditional Chinese assumption is that knowledge lies in the classical and authoritative written texts (Carless, 2009; Hu, 2002). Therefore, the efficient approach to learning is to accumulate knowledge (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996) by reading books and then reciting what is presented and emphasised in the textbooks (Rao, 2006).

The above-mentioned Chinese assumption about learning determines the EFL teaching and learning in China as textbook-centred and memorisation-based. Initially, the textbook-centred teaching is supported by all levels of school stakeholders, education policy makers and

teachers, thus a well-accepted English course must primarily contain a collection of well-selected textbooks (Rao, 1996). In terms of the teaching approach in the EFL classes, the majority of the class teaching is teachers' effort to teaching the texts. They read the texts aloud in front of all students, analyse words and expressions, paraphrase and translate the sentences and ask questions to test students' comprehension, to assist students learn the texts by heart. The EFL classes in China is thus characterised by this process of intensive reading of the textbook. What students are expected to learn is the form-focused language knowledge emphasised in the texts. Secondly, students recite and memorise what they learn from the textbook-centred classes, memorisation is utilised as the way to consolidate their learnt knowledge and to deepen their understanding of the knowledge (Rao, 1996). What deserves particular notice here is that, unlike the learning strategy of rote learning and mechanical memorisation, Chinese students memorise with understanding (Hu, 2002). Western researchers mistaken stereotype Chinese students as merely learning by rote without truly understanding what they learn. Instead, most Chinese students integrate memorisation and understanding in the way to memorise what is understood and to understand what is memorised (Hu, 2002; Lee, 1996; Marton et al., 1996).

The textbook-centred and memorisation-based teaching and learning style deviates from the rationales of TBLT. Initially, in the task-based EFL classes, the core teaching and learning approach is students' participation into the communicative tasks, thus they could acquire language knowledge and develop communicative competence through their authentic language usage. Unlike the textbook-centred teaching complying with the traditional Chinese assumption about learning from written texts, TBLT utilises students' authentic language usage to equip them with the ability to communicate in English in their real life. In the English classes utilising TBLT, teachers no longer need to rely on the textbooks and to focus on the knowledge emphasised in the texts. What students need to acquire is more than merely the language knowledge, but also the communicative competence to solve real-life problems. Secondly, the classes of TBLT require students to act as "negotiators, discoverers and contributors of knowledge and information" (Hu, 2002, p.98). The preferred learning method in TBLT is students' autonomous learning through their own exploration and discovery of language knowledge during their task performance. Contrary to the memorisation-based learning, where students act as the passive recipients of knowledge imparted by teachers, students should autonomously contribute to their own language development in TBLT. During the authentic language usage, students could explore the linguistic rules of language

usage, and further consolidate these rules by practising them in their following task performance. Therefore, students' learning by memorisation to understand the language is diverse from their autonomous exploration of language in TBLT as two reverse cognitive methods, the former requires students' digestion and absorbing of the passively received knowledge, whereas the latter demands students' own analysis and exploration of the knowledge in an active manner.

With regard to the Chinese assumption about learning, teachers and researchers realise the problems in the process of implementing TBLT in China. Firstly, the emphasis on text in traditional Chinese culture drives Chinese teachers to cover all the contents in the textbooks, but the topics, mainly covering the themes of history, literature, geography and culture, are difficult to be changed into pedagogic tasks to prepare students' communicative competence in their real life. Therefore, for Chinese teachers who desire to implement TBLT in their EFL classes, this mismatch between the content in the textbooks and the design of tasks impedes their actual teaching practices. Furthermore, used to the memorisation-based learning approach, Chinese students are limited by their ability deficiency in participating into the communicative tasks (Carless, 2004). What they are accustomed to is the passive way of absorbing the knowledge presented by their teachers since the very first education stage during their childhood. They lack the required English proficiency to freely express their ideas in their interaction with their teachers and peer classmates, thus are demotivated to promote their task participation. On the other hand, Chinese students are also not familiar with the collaborative learning process where their cooperative capabilities still need to be enhanced by practice, thus previous study (Zheng & Borg, 2014) have found out Chinese students' unwillingness to participate into TBLT due to their perceived lack of abilities.

In summary, Figure 2.2 illustrates the problems of TBLT in China given the Chinese assumption of learning. Since Chinese teachers and students give priority to the textbooks as the major source of knowledge and memorisation with understanding as the effective learning approach, the textbook-centred teaching and memorisation-based learning are widely accepted in China, causing the mismatch between EFL teaching and learning in China and the rationales of TBLT. TBLT emphasises language learners' authentic language usage and autonomous learning. Therefore, the mismatches between the Chinese EFL teaching context and TBLT rationales causes problems regarding the implementation of TBLT in China. The Chinese EFL teachers found it challenging to change the topics in textbooks into pedagogic

tasks when they simultaneously need to cover the textbooks and desire to implement TBLT, and Chinese students who are demotivated by their lack of language proficiency and collaborative learning abilities are reluctant to participate into their task performance.

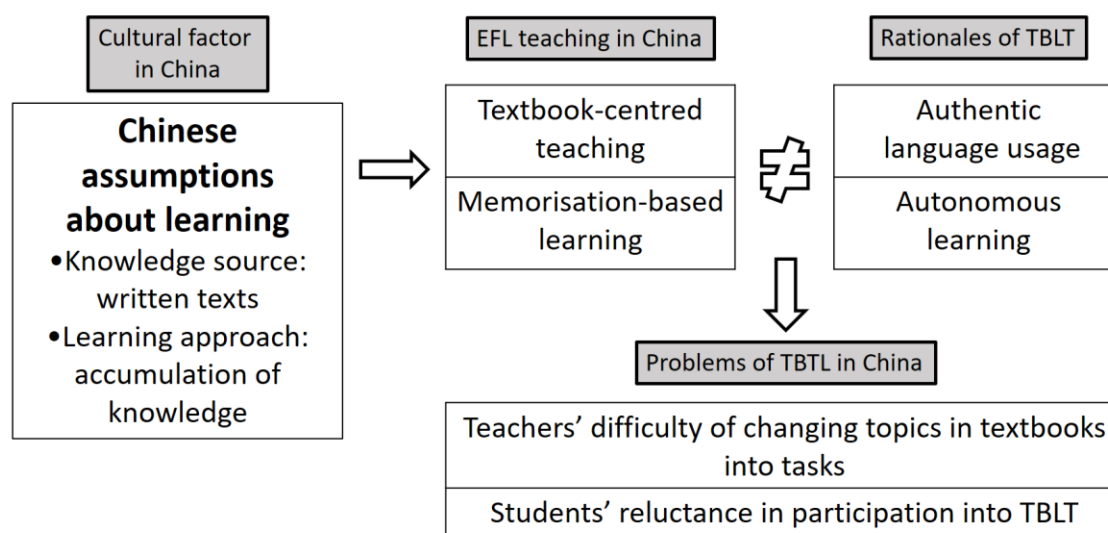


Figure 2.2 Problems caused by the Chinese assumptions about learning

2.2.3. Emphasis on discipline and the Teacher's Authority

Another cultural factor in China influencing the implementation of TBLT is Chinese people's emphasis on discipline. According to the Confucius rationales of education, teachers' authority and dominance in the classes should not be questioned or challenged by students. Teachers are viewed as the only authoritative role model of learning, whose knowledge structure, learning strategy and attitude guide students' learning inside and outside the classroom. Students' argument or negotiation with teachers in the class is considered to be "rude and disrespectful" (Rao, 1996, p. 463).

Thus the traditional classes in China are characterised by the teacher-centred teaching methodology. Teachers present and explain the language knowledge in front of the class, dominating the teaching and learning process of the entire lessons. Teachers analyse and interpret the texts and determine and select what they regard as being useful for students' preparation for the examinations. To maintain the "hierarchical" relation between teachers and students (Hu, 2002, p.98) and to keep the discipline of the class, Chinese students are expected to obey their teachers' instruction but not to challenge their teachers, to be mentally instead of verbally active (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). What they need to do is to passively absorb

teachers' imparted knowledge, connect the new knowledge with their old knowledge, understand, memorise and practise them under teachers' instruction.

The teacher-centred teaching style in China reveals its incongruity with the tenets of TBLT, which is a typical student-centred teaching method. TBLT is theoretically a learner-centred approach in that it aims to develop learners' "linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic and intercultural competences" (Vieira, 2017, p.696). In the task-based EFL classes, both teachers and students are managers of the learning process. Rather than acting as the dominator, interpreter and authority of the class, the teachers are expected to facilitate students' task performance by providing linguistic assistance or communicative strategies. At the same time, students also change their roles of passive recipients of knowledge into active and autonomous explorers of knowledge and participators into the collaborative learning activities. Taking these responsibilities, learners' own expectations, attitudes, learning styles and needs are all taken into consideration (Savignon, 2007). In addition, from the practical perspective, TBLT is also student-centred. Since the central process of TBLT is students' task performance, students could gain the chance to enhance their learner autonomy and develop into self-independent language learners by taking charge of their own language learning during the engagement into the task completion. The sufficient language input in the pre-task stage (Hu, 2002) and students' own participation into the tasks, allows them to critically determine what they could and should learn by themselves.

The disconformity between the teacher-centred teaching in China and the student-centred TBLT causes the problems facing the Chinese teachers and students in TBLT. Since TBLT allows students' freedom and independency, as well as the spontaneity and unpredictability of the learning process (Li, 1984), it is challenging and threatening for Chinese teachers who value their authority and dominance in the teaching process. TBLT is against Chinese values of discipline and teachers' roles, and puts Chinese teachers at the risk of losing face (Hu, 2002). Therefore, some Chinese EFL teachers hold less positive attitudes towards the student-centred TBLT (Carless, 2009), and even avoid this pedagogy in their instruction. Some other Chinese teachers who still try to implement TBLT in their classes, are found to have a narrow (Zheng & Borg, 2014) and vague (Carless, 2009) definition of this teaching method. According to the previous studies (Carless, 2007, 2009; Cui, 2012; Luo & Xing, 2015; Zheng & Borg, 2014), those Chinese teachers failed to distinguish task and exercises, as they utilised tasks as one way for drilling to examine students' mastery of the knowledge

imparted by them, therefore the tasks were always used after the teacher's instruction and presentation like in the traditional classes. As one communicative exercise used in this way, TBLT received the negative views from students, who expressed their perceived waste of time of practicing English knowledge in pedagogic tasks (Carless, 2004).

In summary, the traditional emphasis on discipline and teachers' authority in China deepens the hierarchical relation between teachers and students, both inside and outside the classrooms. This cultural factor allows the teacher-centred teaching as routine in China's EFL classes. The disconformity between the teacher-centred teaching in China and the student-centred TBLT, has caused some Chinese teachers' narrow and vague definition of TBLT, as well as students' negative attitudes toward TBLT.

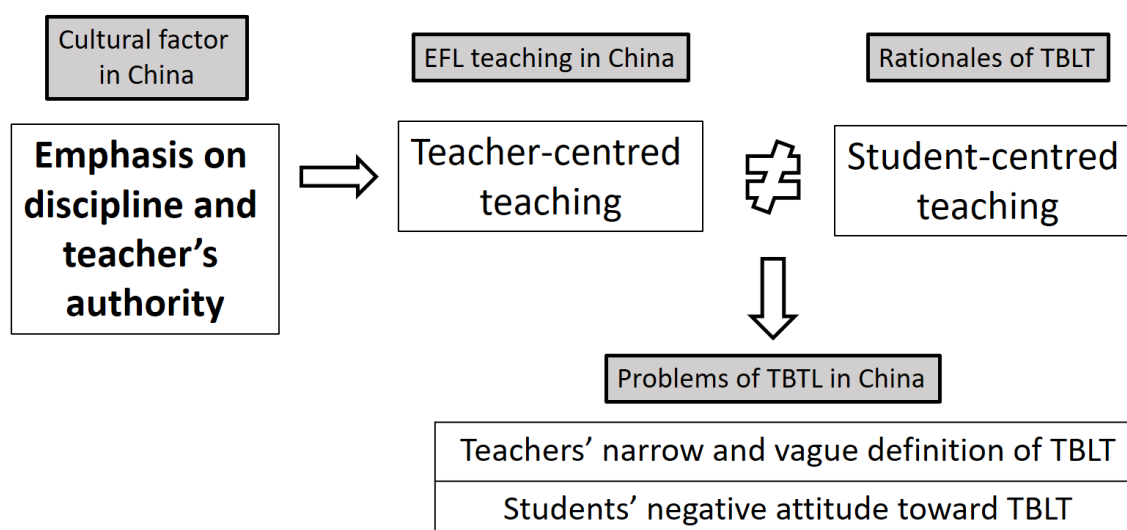


Figure 2.3 Problems caused by the emphasis on discipline and teacher's authority

Based on a critical review of the literature on the implementation of TBLT in China, the above-mentioned problems originated by the specific Chinese context were figured out. The literature review in this field guided the current study from both the theoretical and practical perspectives. Firstly, the Chinese sociocultural factors influence the implementation of TBLT in China in a complex and non-linear manner. Specifically, one factor in particular would generate some different problems in the actual implementation of TBLT, and one specific problem could also be generated by not only one factor. In order to develop culturally appropriate TBLT practices in English classes of Chinese universities, sociocultural factors in China which potentially hinder the implementation of TBLT as discussed in the previous

literature were taken into consideration. The above literature review, therefore, provided theoretical guideline for the current study in what and how to explore in terms of the Chinese sociocultural factors influencing the TBLT practices. Furthermore, all these problems enlightened the revision of TBLT practices in Cycle 1. To solve the problems of TBLT revealed in the previous studies, the researcher proposed adjustments of TBLT practices when they were brought into English classes of Chinese universities. These literature review, therefore, served as the practical threshold for the investigation and the foundation for the innovation in this design-based research.

2.3. TBLT Implementation in China: Developing Four Aspects of Learning

In the process of exploring culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, researchers should consider the positive impact of TBLT practices on Chinese students' language learning as the ultimate evaluation standard. Language learning should involve many aspects in students' language mastery, learning methods, and learning abilities, as discussed in the previous subsection regarding the benefits of TBLT. It would be, however, beyond the scope of this study to examine all of these aspects. Therefore, the researcher focused on four major aspects of language learning in order to provide a comprehensive and critical picture of the culturally conscious implementation of TBLT in China, as illustrated in Figure 2.4.

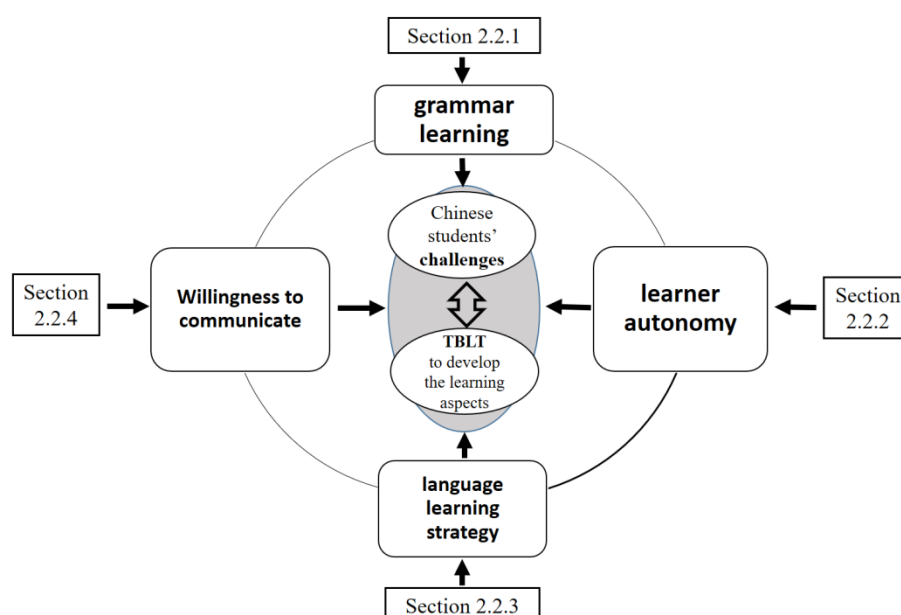


Figure 2.4 Implementation of TBLT in China (associated with four learning aspects)

Specifically, the current study reviewed the implementation of TBLT in China, focusing on four aspects of learning that were featured in previous literature: grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategy (LLS) and willingness to communicate (WTC). The selection of these four learning aspects was primarily based on their significance in the processes of language learning. Furthermore, the Chinese institutional and cultural context causes some challenges for Chinese students in their development of these learning aspects, but TBLT has the potential to assist students in achieving such development. This study thus incorporated these four aspects of learning in order to explore the actual implementation of TBLT in China; a review of relevant literature will further guide the proposed adjustments of TBLT practices in this empirical study (as discussed in Chapter 3).

2.3.1. Implementation of TBLT to Facilitate Chinese Students' Grammar Learning

The first aspect of English learning explored in the current study was grammar teaching and learning. In the previous section of the literature review regarding Chinese teaching and learning traditions noted that studies (e.g. Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007) have already revealed the perceived significance of grammar learning among Chinese teachers and students. The current study, therefore, selected grammar learning as one aspect to explore, because students' success in grammar learning during the adjusted TBLT practices in the design-based research could provide evidence as to the cultural appropriateness of TBLT in China.

The language assessment concepts underlying the grammar-based examination thus places high priority on students' acquisition of knowledge of language features including lexical forms, grammatical forms and phonological forms (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2000), and they oblige teachers to employ grammar-translation teaching methods (Carless, 2004) in their major teaching approaches. Furthermore, English teaching in China has been well known for following the structural syllabus to impart knowledge of particular grammatical structures (Yan, 2015). In traditional language classes, therefore, Chinese teachers tend to plan and select some grammatical structures as the teaching objectives and then utilise explicit grammar instruction as the major teaching method. This also means the major output that learners tend to achieve from this language-form-focused teaching approach is the improvement of writing skills.

By contrast, TBLT researchers and practitioners have proposed some teaching practices to enhance Chinese students' grammar learning.

Firstly, instead of emphasising explicit grammar teaching, TBLT stimulates learners to adopt self-directed learning of the specific grammar structures in order to complete the tasks (Yildiz & Senel, 2017). Learners are encouraged to utilise their own language strategies to handle problems (Ellis, 2003). Teachers do not directly explain grammatical structures but merely guide students to determine how they could convey information by using these structures. This type of self-learning is in line with the rationale of TBLT which emphasises students' central and independent role in language learning (Shang, 2010) and rejects the negative influences of teacher-centred grammar-translation teaching methods in China (Hua, et al, 2011). Secondly, TBLT emphasises language meanings in communicative tasks. Regarding grammar teaching, TBLT integrates its primary focus on meaning and its traditional focus on forms together (Ellis, 2009; Robinson, 2011). This aims to avoid learners' sole development of language fluency and complexity at the expense of language accuracy (Carless, 2015). TBLT thus establishes the methodological rationale of focus on form as a middle path (Doughty and Williams 1998; Long 2000), where language learners' attention transfers to language forms in the context of meanings. While students' attention is primarily focused on language meaning in TBLT, they spontaneously shift focus to language forms when encountering some communicative difficulties in task performances. Thirdly, guided by the focus on form rationale, TBLT practitioners add grammatical input in the pre-task stage. This adjustment aims to supplement the grammar-translation teaching in China to simultaneously arouse Chinese students' focus on language meanings and forms. Furthermore, various task types can also be applied in TBLT to facilitate students' grammar learning. Specifically, Ellis (2003) distinguished between focused and unfocused tasks in terms of whether the tasks predispose students to apply some particular linguistic forms in their task performance. Following this differentiation, TBLT practices can combine them simultaneously. The tasks do not explicitly require students to deploy particular grammatical structures, so the tasks are guided with the rationales of unfocused tasks. However, when teachers design tasks to involve, for example, the application of adjectives or adjective clauses to describe entities, these tasks thus encourage students to employ attributive clauses to promote their task performance. Thus, the tasks could also be categorised as focused ones. In conclusion, such TBLT practices that aim to facilitate students' grammar learning thus guided the intervention cycles in this design-based study.

2.3.2. TBLT Implementation: Developing Chinese Students' Learner Autonomy

Learning autonomy is the second learning aspect investigated in the current study to exploring the implementation of TBLT in China. The most frequently cited definition of learner autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Specifically, in the practice of learner autonomy, one is expected to make one’s own decisions about both learning content and the learning process (Zou, 2011), to complete the learning tasks independently (Higgs, 1988), and to choose and use the necessary resources to scaffold the learning process (Palfreyman, 2003; Watkins et al., 2002). In fact, it is one of the central educational goals in Western societies (Halstead & Zhu, 2009), because most Western cultures view personal autonomy as one signal of human rights (Palfreyman, 2003) and human flourishing (Kant, 1991). Western educators and schoolteachers therefore aim to cultivate their students as independent individuals with the capacity for rational thought and a sense of responsibility, all of which is in line with the requirements of learner autonomy.

The concepts of learner autonomy have been proposed and promoted primarily by western educators, but when further implementing them in the Chinese context, researchers have reported their questions about the cultural appropriateness of the emphasis and development of the western-based concept learner autonomy (Benson et al, 2003; Halstead & Zhu, 2009; Zou, 2011). Specifically, although previous studies have provided evidence to confirm Chinese students’ strong desire for enhancing their learner autonomy (Halstead & Zhu, 2009), Chinese students still have difficulties in autonomous learning due to the institutional and cultural contexts in China.

Firstly, in the teacher-centred and textbook-centred (Wang, 2002) teaching methods, traditional Chinese classroom activities are characterised by the types of knowledge transfer mainly based on textbook contents and teachers’ tutorial instruction (Hua, et al, 2011). Teachers are expected to “dominate the learning process” in the classroom (Halstead & Zhu, 2009, p. 443), whereas Chinese students are taught, beginning in early childhood, to accept the “authority” of their teachers (Halstead & Zhu, 2009, p. 443). The long-rooted educational concept that teachers should be responsible for the success or failure of students’ learning thus hinders students’ development of learner autonomy.

Secondly, Chinese students’ learning styles also prevent them from developing into autonomous learners. Most Chinese EFL learners regard memorisation of linguistic knowledge as the central learning approach in language learning, including the memorisation

of phonological features and syntactic structures. Therefore, in their minds, traditional English classes should involve memorising English passages and then reciting in front of the whole class (Benson et al, 2003). Students' prioritising memorisation thus destroys their enthusiasm for self-learning because they depend heavily on memorisation of digested knowledge imparted from their teachers but recognise few benefits from their own exploration of languages.

Another sociocultural factor causing problems in enhancing learner autonomy in Chinese EFL learners involves the examination system requirements (Benson et al, 2003; Halstead & Zhu, 2009). For most Chinese students at all levels of education, the score in the examinations is still the only assessment criterion for their academic performance at school. A higher score in examinations proves one's overall capabilities in learning, thus promising him/her better chances to be enrolled into a higher level of education and to get a more decent job. In terms of teachers, student performance on the examinations is also the main evidence used by society and parents to affirm the quality of their teaching. For these reasons, the examinations are weighed heavily by both Chinese students and teachers, directing them to learn and teach what is emphasised in the exams. Thus pressured by examinations, students have no choice about what to learn or how to learn; rather, they feel dominated by teachers to learn something in pursuit of better scores.

In order to address the above-mentioned problems in enhancing Chinese students' learner autonomy, TBLT approaches can be applied in Chinese classes. Because TBLT is theoretically a learner-centred approach in that it aims to develop learners' "linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic and intercultural competences" (Vieira, 2017, p. 696), learners' own expectations, attitudes, learning styles and needs are all taken into consideration in TBLT (Savignon, 2007). Students can therefore gain the opportunity to enhance their learner autonomy and to develop into self-independent language learners, who can take charge of their own language learning while engaging in the task completion.

Specifically, in contrast to the traditional form-focused teaching approaches, TBLT has a definite focus on meaning (Willis & Willis, 2007). In the task-based EFL classes, instead of acquiring linguistic knowledge by memorising and understanding what teachers convey to them, learners must explore and discover their own language to fulfil meaningful communicative tasks. Teachers design the tasks primarily to cover meanings of

communication, rather than to teach the linguistic forms. Learners are thus typically required to move from their own experience of focusing on language forms to analysing and practising language meanings (Willis, 1996). Therefore, they can develop learner autonomy through their own discovery and application of certain language meanings. Moreover, TBLT also emphasises the authentic use of language by enhancing learners' engagement in pedagogic tasks involving authentic communication. The representation of real world life in EFL classes can promote students' desire to solve real life problems and to establish their own learning goals related to their daily lives, thus enhancing their learner autonomy with a strong demand to be "a real language user" (Vieira, 2017, p. 697). Therefore, when the task cycle stage provides students with opportunities to engage in some tasks that are more related to their real lives, these tasks can motivate students to perform actively with their authentic language usage. This helps students cultivate their enthusiasm for involving themselves into the tasks, and thus it enhances their learner autonomy during such task performance. These TBLT practices that can develop students' learner autonomy thus instruct and inform the further adjustments of TBLT in this design-based study.

2.3.3. TBLT Implementation: Developing Chinese Students' LLS

Language learning strategy (LLS) is investigated in the current study because of the widely accepted sense that it benefits learners' appropriate use of LLS and determines learners' success in language learning. Specifically, LLS lays "the basis of knowledge development" (Gholami et al. 2014, p. 77), making "learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8) and leading to the learners' greater actual and perceived proficiency, high self-esteem, and improved motivation, among other benefits (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989).

The early researchers on LLS focused attention on the behaviours of good language learners by identifying their operations for acquiring, retaining and performing in their language learning process (Oxford, 1990; Rigney, 1978; Rubin, 1987; Stern, 1975). This constitutes the early, basic definition of LLS. The following studies in the literature of LLS abound in various related definitions (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995), with emphasis on learners' self-direction, consciousness, and actions. Researchers in this field, however, have achieved the consensus that LLS includes the special ways that

successful learners exploit strategies to enhance their comprehension, learning, and processing of information and knowledge.

In order to enhance Chinese TBLT practices and thereby enhance Chinese learners' learning process, the definition of LLS proposed by Griffiths (2003) was applied in the study:

Language learning strategy refers to the "specific actions consciously employed by the learner for the purpose of learning language" (Griffiths, 2003, p. 369).

This definition emphasises what learners actually do in their language learning process, as opposed to other definitions that focus on learners' preference or consciousness (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990, 2011). For the purposes of investigating the problems Chinese learners are confronted with in their learning with TBLT, and to revise the TBLT practices so as to better enhance Chinese learners' English learning, the precise strategies that Chinese learners actually applied in their task performance were investigated according to this definition.

According to the definitions of language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) conceptualises the most widely accepted taxonomy of strategies. There are six groups in this classification: memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Among these six categories, the former three, namely, memory, cognitive, and compensatory strategies are classified as direct strategies, and the latter three are indirect ones. This taxonomy is accepted as the most consistent with learners' actual strategy use (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Zarei & Baharestani, 2014). The categories are described as follows (Oxford, 1990):

- Memory: to improve language learning through repetition and practice of formula, phrase, verse or the like;
- Cognitive: to improve language learning through association between new and already known information;
- Compensatory: to improve language learning through the use of context to make up for missing information;
- Metacognitive: to improve language learning through control of cognition in planning, organizing and evaluating the learning process;

- Affective: to improve language learning through management of emotions, motivation and attitude;
- Social: to improve language learning through interaction with others and through understanding cultural issues.

To better understand and enhance learners' use and development of LLS, researchers have further delved into the factors that influenced learners' selection and application of LLS. The studies have revealed that several learners' individual factors could affect how they choose strategies to promote their language learning, including nationality (Griffiths, 2003; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Usuki, 2000; Yang, 1999), gender (Griffiths, 2003; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989), age (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007), motivations (Ehrman, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Rao, 2006), learning styles (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Li & Qin, 2006) and beliefs (Tang & Tian, 2015).

The evidence to confirm the impact of these individual factors, however, is far from clear or conclusive. Taking students' proficiency level as one example, its influence on students' LLS usage has been widely demonstrated, but studies in this field (Gholami et al, 2014; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Zarei & Baharestani, 2014) have not reached identical results. This can be explained by some researchers' proposals that the examination of merely one influential variable cannot lead to the fixed findings (Ehrman, 1990; Usuki, 2000). Moreover, the influence of some of these individual factors, including nationality, belief and learning style, could be considerably mediated by learners' cultural settings and background (Griffiths, 2003), because learners' cultural practices and experiences that they unconsciously develop can affect what strategies they choose to use (Jang & Jimenez, 2011). This also explains why O'Malley and Chamot (1990) proposed the notion of "cultural and educational influence" (p. 165) in the field of LLS to explore the impact of sociocultural context on students' LLS usage.

Researchers, therefore, further explored how Chinese students use LLS (Gao, 2003, 2006, 2008; Jiang & Smith, 2009; Li & Qin, 2006; Marton et al, 1996; Rao, 2006; Nisbet et al., 2005; Tang & Tian, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2009) and how the Chinese cultural and educational contexts affect their choices and development of LLS (Gao, 2003; Jiang & Smith, 2009; Rao,

2006; Yu & Wang, 2009). Overall, a critical review of all these studies shows Chinese students' LLS use is characterised in the following four features.

Firstly, the overall LLS usage of Chinese learners is ranked at the medium level (Nisbet et al., 2005; Rao, 2006). Because interaction in English is limited in China, English learning is not directly related to Chinese students' daily communications, they therefore lack the passion to excavate and employ LLS in their English learning.

Secondly, Chinese learners centre on memorisation as a major strategy in their English learning (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Marton et al, 1996; Yu & Wang, 2009). Contrary to the long-rooted stereotypical opinions about Asian learners resorting to rote learning or mechanical repetition to memorise English vocabularies and texts, these studies have revealed a more complicated usage of memorisation by Chinese learners. They suggest that students use memorisation in different forms (Jiang & Smith, 2009) to learn the individual words by rote, to repeat grammar exercises, to associate words with synonyms/antonyms and to use word prefixes/suffixes. They also use memorisation in combination with other strategies (Marton et al., 1996; Jiang & Smith, 2009), to memorise through understanding and repetitive reviews, to memorise words' meanings in context, and to internalise the sense of listening. Chinese learners' preferences for memorisation in English learning can be largely attributed to grammar-based national examinations (Jiang & Smith, 2009). The focus of national English examinations at different levels lies in grammar and language knowledge (Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007), so some Chinese students rely heavily on their memorisation of certain vocabularies and grammatical structures to pursue higher scores. In addition, Chinese assumption about learning emphasises accumulation and repetition of knowledge as the major efficient method of learning (Rao, 2006); thus Chinese learners apply memory strategies most frequently.

Furthermore, previous studies have also indicated significant diversity in the frequency of usage among different strategy categories. According to most studies (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Rao, 2006; Yu & Wang, 2009), Chinese learners prefer to apply memory, cognitive and compensatory strategies, whereas they rarely use metacognitive, affective, and social ones. In other words, Chinese learners use more direct strategies than indirect ones. The reasons why Chinese learners use LLS in this way could be multiple. In terms of their frequent usage of direct strategies, the two reasons explaining why Chinese learners rely on memory strategies

could also be transferred to their frequent usage of cognitive and compensatory strategies. Specifically, the major assessment module in the Chinese examination system aims to inspect students' verbal skills in terms of their grammatical and knowledge usage, vocabulary usage, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. Therefore, cognitive strategies that assist students in acquiring and synthesising knowledge, along with compensatory strategies that benefit their language usage in reading/listening comprehension and writing, are normally the learning strategies internalised from their examining strategies. After exercising these examining strategies to solve problems in the examinations, Chinese students become used to these strategies in their daily learning (Jiang & Smith, 2009). Besides, in terms of the Chinese assumption about learning, the emphasis on accumulation of knowledge (Hu, 2002) and reliance on authoritative written texts as knowledge resources (Carless, 2009) generates the textbook-centred and memorisation-based styles of language teaching and learning in China. In the traditional way of reading books and practicing knowledge in drills (Yu & Wang, 2009), Chinese students are familiar with some cognitive strategies, such as producing summaries of information, and some compensatory strategies, such as guessing what would follow in the next text or conversation. In addition, the EFL context, where interaction in English is limited, also reduces Chinese students' desires and opportunities to speak English outside, even inside the English classes (Yu & Wang, 2009). Being less motivated, and with such insufficient opportunities of communication in English, Chinese students use the indirect strategies less frequently.

Finally, some researchers have also concluded that Chinese students use LLS in an inefficient manner (Yu & Wang, 2009). Their more frequently employed strategies, such as memory strategies, could not indeed assist with their English learning. Li and Qin (2006) also reported that some Chinese learners, those with lower proficiency in particular, found some difficulties in attempting those strategies not specifically compatible with their learning styles. Learning styles, defined as an individual's natural and preferred way of learning (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990), exert influence on learners' choice of LLS (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Li & Qin, 2006). For example, extraverts, whose learning style is extraversion, tend to use practicing and cooperation, thus they prefer metacognitive and social strategies. By contrast, introverts are inclined to use more memory and cognitive strategies. Some Chinese participants in the study (Li & Qin, 2006), although being conscious about their disadvantages related to their learning styles, still held negative attitudes toward the new strategies of other learning styles. Their use of strategies was largely

confined to their learning styles and, therefore, limited their learning opportunities and hindered their English learning. Some Chinese students' inefficient use of LLS could be attributed in part to the teacher-centred teaching in China. Correspondent to teachers' authority in Chinese culture, the English classes in China are characterised by teachers' instruction and students' obedience to their teachers. In this way, there are few opportunities for autonomous or collaborative learning, which require Chinese students' exploration and practice of new strategies, their usage of LLS is therefore gradually confined to their own learning styles as well as influenced by teachers' instruction.

In order to address the above-mentioned problems confronted by Chinese EFL learners, researchers then proposed some teaching approaches to enhance Chinese students' LLS usage. The major procedures include recognising the diversity between the ESL and EFL settings (Green & Oxford, 1995; Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Rao, 2006), encouraging students to fully engage into the learning activities (Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2009), and expanding the range of students' LLS usage by providing them strategy training (Chou, 2017; Field, 2008; Li & Qin, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Most researchers have explored the pedagogic procedures in strategy training for students. They have proposed and examined two main approaches in strategy training: one is to raise students' awareness through the teacher instruction (Field, 2008); and the other is the "embedded instruction" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 153), which integrates the introduction and practice of LLS as part of the class instruction.

Based on these proposals, two studies experimented with developing students' LLS in TBLT. One of these studies (Gao et al., 2017) described a new model of LLS training for Chinese students. The model of TCLTSP—which stood for Task experiencing, Contribution of the teacher/students, Learners' self-understanding, Target language, language learning Strategies, and taking control of the learning Process—was theoretically and practically conducted in a task-based framework. The researchers trained students in the usage of LLS, and instructed them to reflect on their own LLS usage during their task performance. Results showed students' better understanding of LLS and higher motivation about their own language learning. Another study, conducted by Chou (2017), introduced a task-based approach to developing Chinese students' metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension. Following the four phrases of TBLT proposed by Norris (2011), encompassing task input, pedagogical task work, task performance, and task follow-up, the researcher embedded the

metacognitive instruction into the task-based lessons. After 16 weeks, compared with their peers in the normally instructed listening classes, students in task-based listening classes showed higher level of both metacognitive awareness and usage of listening strategies, as well as a better overall performance in listening comprehension.

Therefore, the immersion of strategy training into TBLT practices in these two studies guided the further adjustments of TBLT in this study. Specifically, except for the memory strategies that are most frequently used and strongly emphasised by Chinese students (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Marton et al, 1996; Yu & Wang, 2009), teachers can train in all the other five categories of LLS in TBLT. Moreover, based on the different cognitive and linguistic requirements of the three stages of TBLT, the five LLS, respectively, can be trained in different stages. Specifically, in the pre-task stage, teachers can train in the affective strategies to assist students to better plan and organise their following task performance. In the task cycle stage, where students' task performance requires their communicative interaction, teachers can train the compensatory and social strategies to assist students' fluent and active task performance. In the final language focus stage, TBLT focuses on the linguistic knowledge as the learning goal to supplement students' language complexity and accuracy, apart from the fluency gained in the communicative tasks. Therefore, cognitive and memory strategies can be trained to assist students' cognitive processing of language knowledge. These TBLT practices adjusted from the literature review thus instructed and informed the researcher to do the further pedagogic innovation in this study.

2.3.4. TBLT Implementation: Developing Chinese Students' WTC

The notion of WTC was initially introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985) in the field of individuals' communication in L1. Considering the "dual characteristics" (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 289) of WTC as being both trait-like and situational, the definition of WTC is also conceptualised from these two perspectives. Initially, the researchers conceptualise the trait-like WTC as the readiness to communicate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991), regarding it as "personality-based" (Zarrinabadi, 2014, p. 289) and relatively stable across situations. Then the researchers proposed the new conception of WTC as the intention to engage in L2 communication "with specific person or persons" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547), proposing the possibility that WTC is situationally affected by numerous contextual variables. Considering the ways in which the current research aimed to revise culturally appropriate

TBLT practices in a Chinese context, the situational perspective of WTC was applied in the current study.

Given the pivotal significance of interaction and communication in SLA (Ellis, 2015; Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 1989; Swain, 2000), WTC is regarded as the most immediate and direct predictor of L2 use and has been proposed as one of the primary goals of L2 Pedagogy (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al, 1998). Learners' higher development of WTC encouraged them to employ more L2 in authentic communication both inside and outside the SLA classrooms, thus providing them with more opportunities to expand their language learning (Kang, 2005; Zarrinabadi, 2014).

In order to enhance students' WTC, researchers investigated the factors that affected students' development of WTC, including the individual factors, contextual factors, and sociocultural factors. Firstly, students' internal, individual factors include psychological factors, such as perceived opportunities (Peng, 2012; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018); motivation (MacIntyre et al, 2002; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010); confidence (Cao & Philip, 2006; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018); and anxiety (Kang, 2005; Peng, 2012; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018), as well as their linguistic factors, such as language proficiency (Grant, 2018; MacIntyre, 1994; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018) and code-switching (Syed & Kuzborska, 2018).

Secondly, more recent studies have emphasised the influences of contextual factors on students' development of WTC. Specifically, the topic under discussion influences learners' WTC (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al. 2011; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Zarrinabadi, 2014). The interesting and familiar topics enhance their sense of security, confidence, and motivation, allowing them to be more willing to communicate. In addition, teachers' friendly and respectful attitudes, active involvement and support, supportive teaching style, longer wait time after students' errors to provide correction, all have the potential to increase learners' WTC (Kang, 2005; Peng, 2007; Wen & Clement, 2003; Zarrinabadi, 2014). Moreover, students' peer interlocutors also affect their WTC. When interacting with peers they are familiar or friendly with, and when learners can obtain assistance and warm feedback from their interlocutors, most learners show higher WTC (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018). Another contextual factor is the interactional context (Kang, 2005; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010;

Zarrinabadi et al., 2014). In the friendly, familiar, cohesive, and secure class environment, students would actively explore the opportunities to communicate with both their classmates and their teachers. In addition, the detailed and various design and implementation of class activities also would affect students' distinct levels of WTC. Jamalifar and Salehi (2017) confirmed in their study that rehearsal planning, which allowed students to complete the tasks for the second time, increased the students' WTC by enhancing their perceived linguistic competence and self-confidence and reducing their stress in communication. By contrast, students in both the strategic pre-task planning (focusing on the task content and linguistic resources) groups and the no-planning groups showed no significant increase in their WTC. Finally, research has found that group size would also affect students' levels of WTC (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Zarrinabadi et al, 2014). In the discussion with small groups rather than in the whole class activities, most students would take more responsibility for participating in the communication.

Chinese students' WTC also tends to be influenced by the individual and contextual factors mentioned above (Eddy-U, 2015; Grant, 2018; Peng, 2007, 2012; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Moreover, a critical review of the literature showed that Chinese students meet some challenges in developing their WTC due to the sociocultural context in China. These sociocultural factors include teachers' authority, the other-oriented culture, the grammar-based examinations, and students' limited communication opportunities.

Firstly, in the teacher-centred classes (Peng, 2007; Wen & Clement, 2003), Chinese students view their teachers both as the pivotal knowledge resources to impart instruction and as the class authority to establish the rules, so they are obedient to their teachers' instruction, attentive in listening to their teachers' presentations, and busy taking notes of their perceived useful knowledge. Being mentally instead of verbally active, they tend to be reluctant to freely express their ideas verbally. Secondly, the other-oriented culture (Lu & Hsu, 2008; Peng, 2007, 2012; Wen & Clement, 2003) also reduces Chinese students' WTC. Influenced by Chinese cultural heritage, Chinese people highly value their behaviours to conform to social norms and others' expectations. Most Chinese students would feel a qualm in responding to their teachers or to other classmates, to avoid others' negative judgment and to protect their public image or 'face', defined as "claimed sense of positive image in a relational and network context" (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p. 53). This hesitation, however, reflects as a sign of unwillingness or inability to communicate (MacIntyre & Blackie, 2012)

and increases the tendency to hesitate more in the future. Furthermore, the grammar-based examination in China also impedes Chinese students from actively developing their WTC in English classes (Peng, 2007, 2012). The grammar-based and form-focused English examinations in China primarily aim to test learners' acquisition of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary utilisation skills. Since oral tests are not compulsory in the most important national examinations in China, most Chinese students do not emphasise communicative competence in their English learning. Being less motivated to enhance their oral English competence, Chinese students are less willing to communicate through oral interaction in English, compared with taking drills of grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Finally, Chinese students have limited opportunities to communicate in English; this also impedes their willingness to communicate when they are required to perform tasks in English. The mono-linguistic context in China determines that Chinese learners are "limited in their accessibility to English" in daily life (Liu et al., 2018, p. 1). In English classes, however, teachers are required to complete the syllabus (Carless, 2009) and to cover all contents in the textbooks, and students still have few chances to communicate in English. This could be attributed to the evaluation system for teachers in China, which assesses teachers via how far they achieve the teaching goals and how well they complete the syllabus.

Based on the investigation of the learner factors, contextual factors, and sociocultural factors that influence students' WTC in classes, researchers have proposed some pedagogical methods to enhance students' WTC. Specifically, one study has provided evidence that TBLT could benefit Chinese learners' increase in WTC. Grant (2018) compared 150 Chinese students' WTC levels before and after a task-based immersion programme of 3 weeks. Data collected from the WTC questionnaires revealed that the task-based language programme increased students' perceived competence and motivation for language learning and simultaneously decreased their anxiety in language use, thus enhancing their WTC levels. The author concluded that the reason for these benefits was because TBLT provided students with communicative opportunities and developed their WTC through practice activities. This study was conducted specifically to enhance students' WTC in TBLT, however, it did not consider the sociocultural factors influencing the actual benefits of TBLT, thus it cannot be generalised in the English classes in China. Eddy-U (2015) also delved into Chinese students' WTC during their task performance in TBLT. This study aimed to construct a dynamic model of factors influencing Chinese students' WTC; therefore, it failed to account for the specific influence of the design and implementation of TBLT. Besides, this study limited its focus to

the individual and contextual factors but did not consider the sociocultural factors in the Chinese context, thus it inspired further research.

Despite the limitations of these two studies, they indeed contributed to the further adjustments of TBLT practices in order to develop Chinese students' WTC. Firstly, Grant's (2018) study demonstrated that students could enhance their WTC in their self-learning in tasks, this thus guided the adjustment in this study to insist upon the student-centred learning in each the three stages of TBLT. Furthermore, Grant (2018) emphasised the positive impact on WTC of students' practicing communication in groups. This finding thus can be combined with other findings suggesting that the smaller group size would enhance students' WTC (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Zarrinabadi et al., 2014), as well as showing that both one-way and two-way tasks can motivate students to be more willing to communicate (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014). Therefore, two students can form one pair to complete the entire task in both one-way and two-way tasks. Moreover, because Eddy-U (2015) further demonstrated the impact of task topics on students' WTC in TBLT, further adjusted TBLT practice, can allow students to choose topics familiar and interesting for themselves (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2014; Zarrinabadi et al., 2014). These approaches all guided the actual adjustments of TBLT practices in this study.

2.4. Conclusion

The first section in this chapter reviewed the previous studies on the theoretical concepts and pedagogical practices of TBLT. The definition of TBLT, types of the tasks, procedures of TBLT all were elaborated as a frame of reference for designing and implementing TBLT practices in this design-based research. Another part of the literature review on TBLT illuminated the factors influencing learners' task performance that were investigated in previous empirical studies. This review provided a holistic analytical perspective for the researcher to understand and highlight which actual TBLT practices to adapt and how to design them in classroom settings. The final part in the first section revealed the benefits of TBLT on students' language learning. This part guided the current study from two perspectives. Initially, the benefits proved by previous researchers could also emerge in the English classes in China. The researcher thus contrived to transfer these benefits of TBLT into the current study. Moreover, in order to guarantee this transfer, and considering the divergences between the Western contexts for most previous studies and the Chinese contexts

for the current study, the researcher encompassed the Chinese context into the process investigating the benefits of TBLT in China. How, in the current study, to maximise the benefits of TBLT discussed in the previous studies; this demanded a further review of the actual Chinese context where TBLT would be implemented.

The second section in this chapter thus reviewed the implementation of TBLT in China. The previous studies reported that the disjunctions between the Chinese traditions of teaching and learning and the rationales of TBLT indeed reduced the benefits of TBLT on Chinese students' language learning. Specifically, the grammar-based national examination system, the Chinese assumptions about learning, as well as the traditional emphasis on discipline and teachers' authority, all determined the form-focused, teacher-centred, and textbook-based traditional teaching method in EFL classes. The Chinese context, therefore, has conflicted with the meaning-focused, student-centred TBLT that emphasises students' actual language usage in task performance. These conflicts thus demand that teachers who implement TBLT in their EFL classes in China need to be assisted with a more culturally appropriate model of TBLT adapted to maximise the benefits of this pedagogic instrument and to minimise the obstacles in the Chinese context. This study was designed and conducted to develop such a model, in which the researcher adjusted TBLT practices to allow the method to benefit Chinese students' language learning.

In terms of what specific aspects of learning that TBLT practices can impact for Chinese students, the third section in this chapter reviewed four specific learning aspects. The previous studies reported that the disjunctions between the Chinese traditions of teaching and the rationales of TBLT indeed created challenges for Chinese students in their learning with TBLT. Specifically, the institutional and cultural reality in China impedes Chinese students' development in their grammar learning, learner autonomy, LLS, and WTC. These challenges thus demand that teachers who implement TBLT in their EFL classes in China need to be assisted with a more culturally appropriate model of TBLT in order to maximise the benefits of this pedagogical instrument and to minimise the obstacles in the Chinese educational context. This study was designed and conducted to develop such a model, in which the researcher adjusted TBLT practices to allow them to be culturally appropriate in the Chinese context. Underpinned with this research aim, literature review in this part constitutes Cycle 1 in this design-based research, in which the researcher adjusted TBLT practices based on findings of previous relevant studies reported in the literature. Furthermore, although

previous researchers have proposed some TBLT practices in order to encourage Chinese students' development in various learning aspects, few studies to date have documented the verification or transfer of these implications into actual classroom practices in the Chinese context (Zhang, 2003). The following chapters thus will present the process of demonstrating the actual practices in reality. This process will be discussed theoretically, initially, with the underlying theoretical framework and then tested practically in the actual classroom settings in the design-based research.

Chapter 3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks to Implement TBLT in the English Classes of Chinese Universities

This chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were deployed as the underpinning frameworks guiding the conduct of the present research. The study draws from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory as a theoretical frame to examine culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, and it interrogates the cultural-historical context in relation to students' task performance. Therefore, the theoretical framework integrates the concept of mediation by artefacts with the genetic method in order to assist the researcher to investigate 'how' and 'why' TBLT impacts Chinese students' language learning and to understand how to adjust TBLT in a culturally appropriate manner within the three interventions. Therefore, this chapter consists of two sections. The first section discusses Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, drawing from two specific aspects of the theory, which allows for the design of the theoretical framework used in this research project. The second section discusses the conceptual framework that outlines the key learning aspects influenced by TBLT, which are used as a conceptual tool and practical guide to investigate the implementation of TBLT.

3.1. Theoretical Framework of the Current Study

This study adopts Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as the underpinning theory to investigate socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. Sociocultural theory embeds individual's human development in social relationships and historical time (Cole, 1996; Dang & Marginson, 2013). Therefore, this study chooses this theoretical framework for its capacity to demonstrate how sociocultural factors affect learning, and to conceptualise students' language learning as a process. At the heart of this framework are Vygotsky's proposals of mediation by artefacts and genetic method, which respectively emphasise the significance of exploring the sociocultural context and historical progress in students' language learning. This section thus will firstly introduce the two sociocultural concepts, and then elaborate how this study applied them in order to establish the theoretical framework.

3.1.1. Two Concepts of Sociocultural Theory Applied in this Study

3.1.1.1. Mediation by Artefacts

From the sociocultural perspective of Vygotsky (1978), the understanding of human cognition and learning is seen as socially and culturally mediated rather than an entirely individual phenomenon (Palincsar, 1998). Learning is defined as “a social activity that develops through the mediation” of the learning setting (Jang & Jimenez, 2011, p.145), in which the specific artefacts, practices and interactions all mediate the learning process and outcomes. Sociocultural theory thus claims that learners’ minds and practices are co-constructed through social mediation, and this theory recognises the central role of culturally constructed artefacts in mediating human development (Vygotsky, 1978). Humans employ physical and psychological artefacts to change the environment and simultaneously transform themselves and thereby realise their own development (Vygotsky, 1981). In this process, the artefact used by humans mediates individual human development and also “breaks down the walls that isolate the individual mind from the culture and society” (Engeström, 1999, p. 29).

Vygotsky illustrated this process of mediation by artefacts in Figure 3.1. Below, S represents the primary stimulus. Mediation is illustrated as X factor, which is the ‘auxiliary or secondary stimulus’ used by humans to achieve the response R.

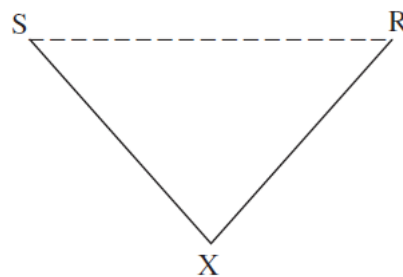


Figure 3.1 Vygotsky’s process of mediation by artefacts, Adopted from Vygotsky (1978, p. 40)

The figure represents Vygotsky’s summary of mediation by artefacts. Human development is not merely driven by their stimuli, but it is also mediated by externalised artefacts (Bakhurst, 2009; Dang & Marginson, 2013). The artefacts humans employ encompass two major categories: the physical “tools” used to work on nature, and the psychological “signs” used to transform humans themselves (Dang & Marginson, 2013, p. 146). Vygotsky distinguished these two artefacts in that they mediate human behaviour in different manners. The

“externally oriented” tools assist humans to master nature, whereas the “internally oriented” signs help master humans’ internal activities (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55). Mediation by artefacts is thus bi-directional, because it simultaneously shapes humans’ social relationships and determines their mental activities. Based on this analysis, it is suggested that humans’ behaviours should be explored primarily by situating them into the sociocultural context where these behaviours occur (Lantolf, 2000).

The current study thus chose the concept of mediation by artefacts in sociocultural theory as the first part of the theoretical framework. Because language is reported as one type of “psychological artefact” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 137), language creates the link between human and society by mediating both humans’ social and mental activities, and it mediates humans’ behaviours in the sociocultural context (Lantolf, 2000). In the research process that investigates students’ language learning, therefore, language development cannot be truly understood outside of the sociocultural context in which students develop their language learning.

Underpinned by this perspective, researchers (Pham & Renshaw, 2014, 2015) have conducted various studies and asserted that when teaching and learning practices are brought into a foreign context, the implementers need to carefully consider the influences of the local social and cultural factors. These researchers have then suggested that foreign practices often need to be modified to become hybrid practices. The current research utilised sociocultural theory as theoretical guidance and Pham and Renshaw’s research as methodological guidance.

3.1.1.2. The Genetic Method

As culturally constructed artefacts are subject to “continuous change” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 61), sociocultural theory thus suggests a “historical point of view into the investigation of behaviour” (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 141). Based on the reality that artefacts are transferred from one generation to the next, Vygotsky’s concept of genetic analysis advances an “explanatory” analytic framework for the human mind and human behaviour (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 164). It proposes the necessity of understanding human behaviours as the history of behaviour (Cross, 2010) and identifies four interrelated domains in the span of human development (Vygotsky, 1981).

The genetic method locates human development into a longitudinal continuum in the “four general fundamental genetic stages” through which human development emerges (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 156): the phylogenetic domain (humans’ natural evolution), the cultural-historical domain (social settings of human activities), the ontogenetic domain (individual lifespan), and the microgenetic domain (immediate and practical activities). Activities in one domain are continuously related to activities in the other domains. Cole and Engeström (1993) thus illustrated this genetic method in Figure 3.2. The four horizontal lines represent the four domains of genesis, among which a domain at a lower level is embedded in the level above, and all the domains are mutually interrelated. The ellipse running vertically through the figure represents the analysed activity, revealing “the nested and interrelated nature” of the four domains (Cross, 2010, p. 438).

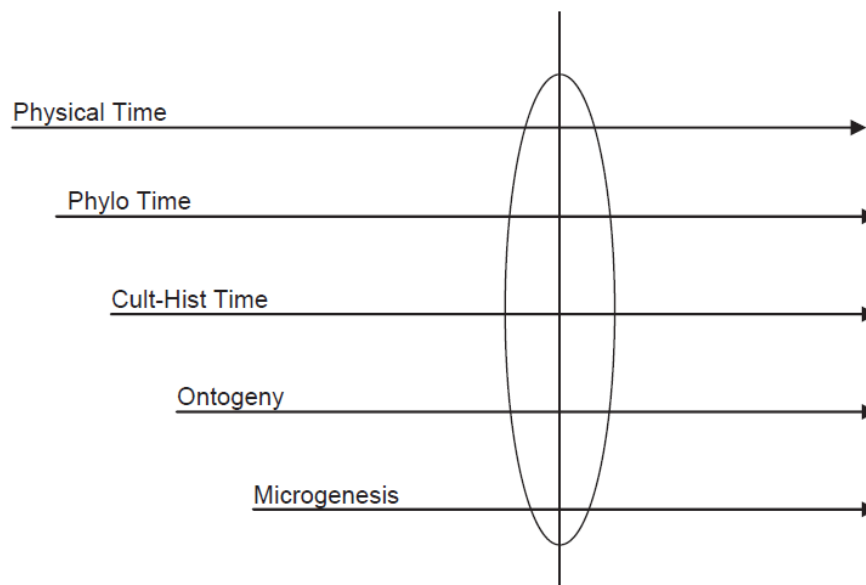


Figure 3.2 Sociocultural theoretical domains of genetic analysis (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p.20)

3.1.2. Theoretical Framework and Sociocultural Theory

The above-mentioned sociocultural concepts of mediation by artefacts and genetic method have guided the current study and thus helped establish the theoretical framework.

3.1.2.1. Application of Mediation by Artefacts in the Theoretical Framework

Firstly, mediation by artefacts emphasises students' applications of the culturally mediated artefacts in their learning, thus it proposes that, in pursuit of culturally appropriate TBLT in China's university English class, the social and cultural factors within and outside the English classes of Chinese universities needed teachers' consideration. The following figure shows the theoretical framework underpinned by the concept of mediation by artefacts in sociocultural theory.

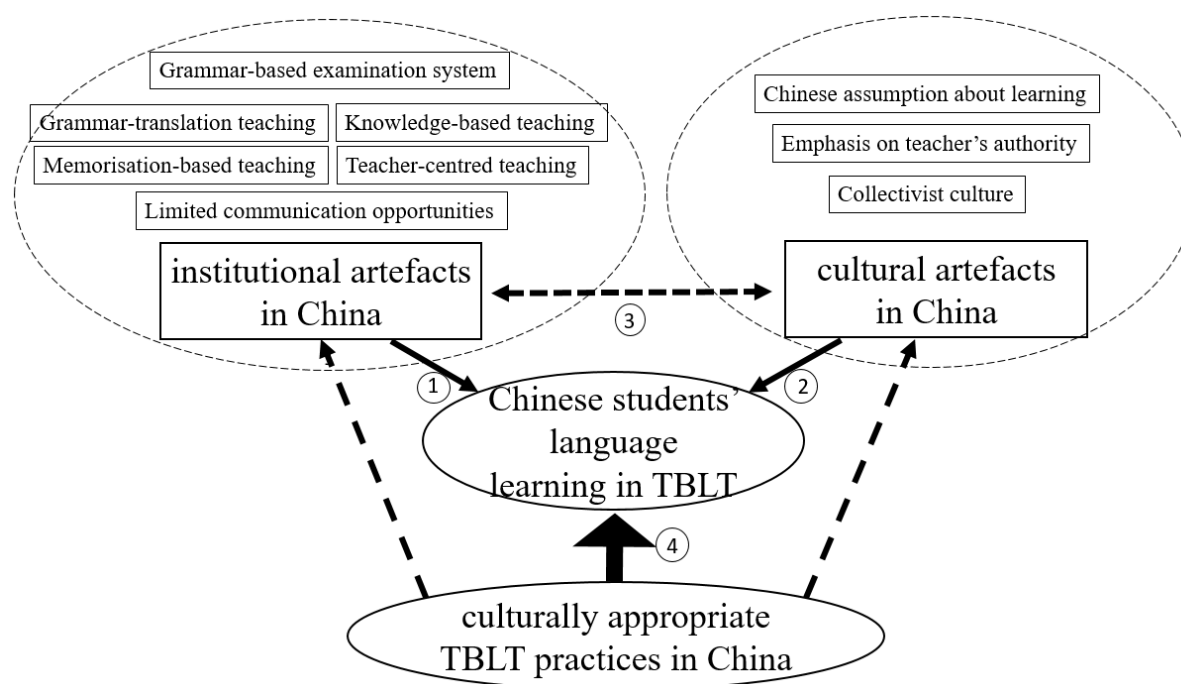


Figure 3.3 Application of mediation by artefacts in the current study

As illustrated in the Figure 3.3, Chinese students employ institutional and cultural artefacts to develop their language learning in TBLT. The arrows labelled 1 and 2 thus show these artefacts' mediation on Chinese students' language learning. Specifically, the literature review in Chapter 2 reveals that the institutional artefacts impacted by the educational policies and practices in China (Carless, 2009) include the grammar-based examination system, grammar-translation teaching, knowledge-based teaching, teacher-centred teaching, and memorisation-based teaching as well as limited communication opportunities. The grammar-based examination system in China emphasises the assessment of students' mastery of grammar knowledge, and thus it influences most English classes in China, which are instructed in the grammar-translation, knowledge-based, and teacher-centred teaching.

Another institutional artefact employed by the participants in this study was the limit in communication opportunities for Chinese students; such limits were determined by both the teacher-centred teaching system and the mono-linguistic reality in China. The final institutional artefact was memorisation-based teaching, in which most Chinese students were accustomed to memorising language knowledge rather than practicing language skills in oral communication. The emphasis on memorisation-based teaching was determined by the Chinese assumption about learning as one cultural artefact, because most Chinese people assume learning to be a laborious process in which accumulation of memorised knowledge is significant. Therefore, the interactions between the institutional and cultural artefacts in this study were transparent in that these artefacts were interrelated and influenced each other. In Figure 3.3, the arrow labelled with the number 3 shows the complicated interrelationships between diverse artefacts. Another cultural artefact of the study was the Chinese people's emphasis on teacher's authority; thus, this determined teacher-centred teaching's inclusion as one institutional artefact. The final cultural artefact was the collectivist culture that required Chinese students to pursue collectivist achievement in groups. Because previous studies have already revealed significant impacts of these sociocultural factors on Chinese students' learning, this study aimed to extend these findings to explore Chinese students' perceptions and applications of these factors as artefacts in their concrete learning practices in TBLT. This helped adjust the TBLT practices to address Chinese students' concrete challenges and to facilitate their actual learning practices.

Moreover, when Chinese students are employing the institutional and cultural artefacts to facilitate their language learning, these artefacts simultaneously mediate the implementation of TBLT practices. In order to facilitate Chinese students' learning in TBLT, therefore, educators and teachers need to delve into the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. Once the adjustments of TBLT practices conform to the institutional and cultural reality in China, they are culturally appropriate to the Chinese context. The two arrows in dashed lines in Figure 3.3 thus show the congruity between the adjusted TBLT practices and the sociocultural context, and the arrow labelled with the number 4 represents the fact that culturally appropriate TBLT practices might exert positive impact on Chinese students' language learning. This also reflects the ultimate research aim of the current study: to explore culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China in order to facilitate Chinese students' English learning.

3.1.2.2. Application of Genetic Method in the Theoretical Framework

In addition to the mediation by artefacts, the present study also added the genetic method of sociocultural theory to the theoretical framework. Firstly, it was chosen as an aspect within the theoretical framework due to its capacity to identify learning as a process. Unlike other descriptive-analytic research orientations that focus on *how* students think and behave (Cross, 2010), the genetic method requires an explanatory orientation in order to investigate the reasons *why* student performance has developed. This method thus helps explore the two research questions. Specifically, genetic analysis of the students' learning process allows for the exploration of the ways that TBLT practices and Chinese sociocultural contexts impact concrete learning attitudes and behaviours. Secondly, interactions between the ontogenetic and microgenetic stages reveal the continuum of language learning, in which the students' previous learning experience might influence their performance in TBLT in the longitudinal context. This helps establish a comprehensive view of Chinese students' development in their language learning, where their development can be recorded in a longitudinal continuum and explained by their previous learning experiences. Thirdly, interactions between the cultural-historical domain and other domains propose the notion of geneticism that indicates the individual's behaviour can be explained in terms of the history of both the individual and the species (Dang, 2017; Lantolf, 2000).

The genetic method thus echoes the concept of mediation by artefacts; both of these sociocultural concepts disclose the interactions between individual behaviours and the societal context. In the current study, therefore, the genetic method supports the investigation of the research aim about culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China because it emphasises the impact of the sociocultural context on students' learning activities, and it also views teaching practices in TBLT as a culturally mediated process. Finally, the correlation between the four domains can provide a comprehensive lens through which we can observe the students' language learning in TBLT since the four domains in the genetic method can refer to specific, different aspects of students' learning in the current study. Specifically, the microgenetic stage includes the concrete learning practices and strategies in the students' task performance; the ontogenetic stage refers to the students' learning experiences in their own life stories; the cultural-historical stage represents both the micro-context in the classroom and the university and the macro-context of the entirety of Chinese society; and the phylogenetic stage includes the students' inner cognitive activities in their task performances.

Therefore, the notion of genetic method in sociocultural theory provides a theory, and essentially a tool, for the analysis of the participants' learning. Because the current study focused on the students' actual perceptions towards TBLT practices and their concrete learning behaviours in their task-based classes, the phylogenetic domain displaying their inner cognitive activities were not examined in the data analysis stage, as explained in Chapter 4. Figure 3.4 below thus illustrates the application of three domains in the genetic method in the current study.

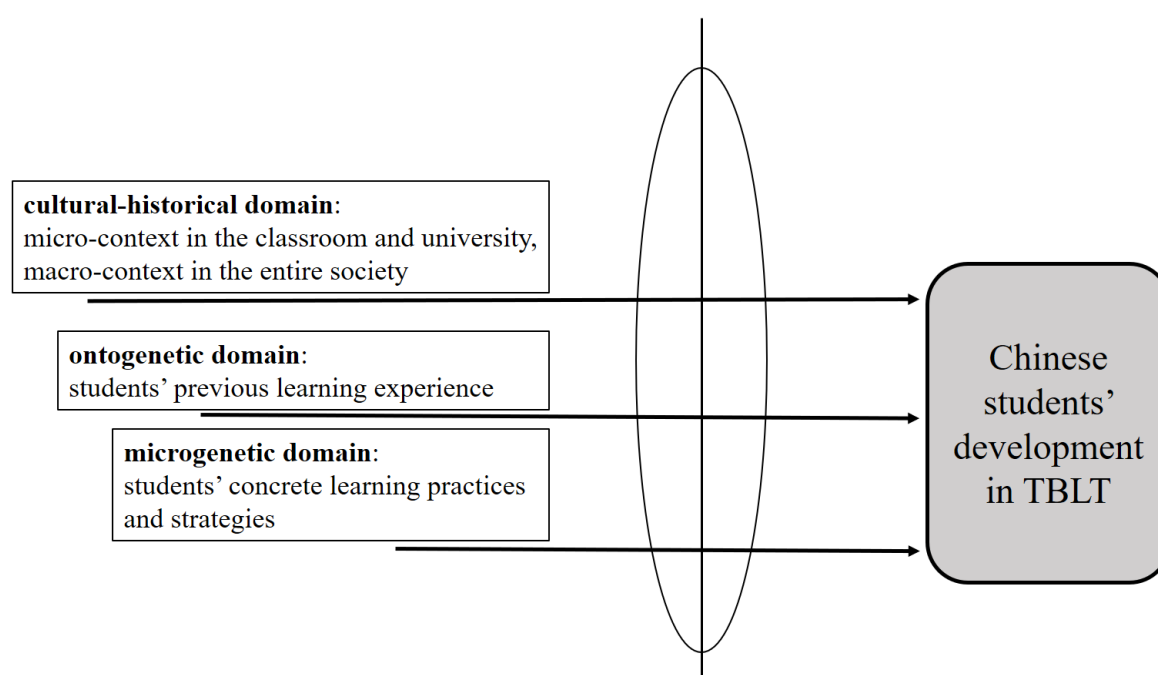


Figure 3.4 Application of genetic method in the current study

Specifically, the three domains in the genetic method exert a collaborative influence on students' language learning. Chinese students traditionally pursue their development of language learning in their concrete learning practices and pursue their application of learning strategies in task-based classes. This microgenetic domain of student development is influenced by their previous learning experiences that are associated with TBLT rationales and practices. This ontogenetic domain of student development thus interacts with the microgenetic domain to determine students' development. Furthermore, the cultural-historical domain, including both the micro-context of students' classroom and university settings and the macro-context of the entirety of Chinese society, simultaneously affects the ontogenetic domain and the microgenetic domain, because the complicated Chinese cultural and educational contexts influence both students' previous learning experiences and their current learning practices. Therefore, the three domains interact to determine Chinese students'

development in the task-based classes. The ellipse in Figure 3.4 represents this interaction between the three domains.

3.1.2.3. Theoretical framework

Thus, the current study applied both mediation by artefacts and the genetic method in order to guide the investigation of Chinese students' development in TBLT. Analysis of Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4 shows the connection between the applications of these two concepts in two aspects.

Firstly, both the concept of mediation and the genetic method regard students' development and progress as the ultimate goals of analysis. Regarding mediation by artefacts, this concept views students' employment of artefacts as the foundation for their development. Regarding genetic method, this method emphasises students' development as a longitudinal progress that includes the four genetic stages and domains. Therefore, these two sociocultural concepts both help establish Chinese students' development as the ultimate research aim of this study; the current study aimed to explore the culturally appropriate TBLT practices that would serve to enhance Chinese students' language learning.

Secondly, there is an overlap between these two concepts in that they both analyse the sociocultural context as one significant aspect to consider. Regarding mediation by artefacts, this sociocultural concept analyses students' language development in the sociocultural context because language itself is a socio-culturally mediated artefact. Regarding the genetic method, it emphasises the cultural-historical domain as one crucial ingredient of human activities because the sociocultural settings where students strive to achieve their development affect their actual attitudes toward learning as well as their learning behaviours. Therefore, in the current study that aimed to investigate culturally appropriate TBLT practices to enhance Chinese students' language learning, the Chinese sociocultural context deserves consideration in order to explore how the Chinese context influences students' actual perceptions of TBLT as well as their actual behaviours in TBLT.

In conclusion, the interactions between mediation by artefacts and the genetic method help establish the theoretical framework of this study, as shown in Figure 3.5.

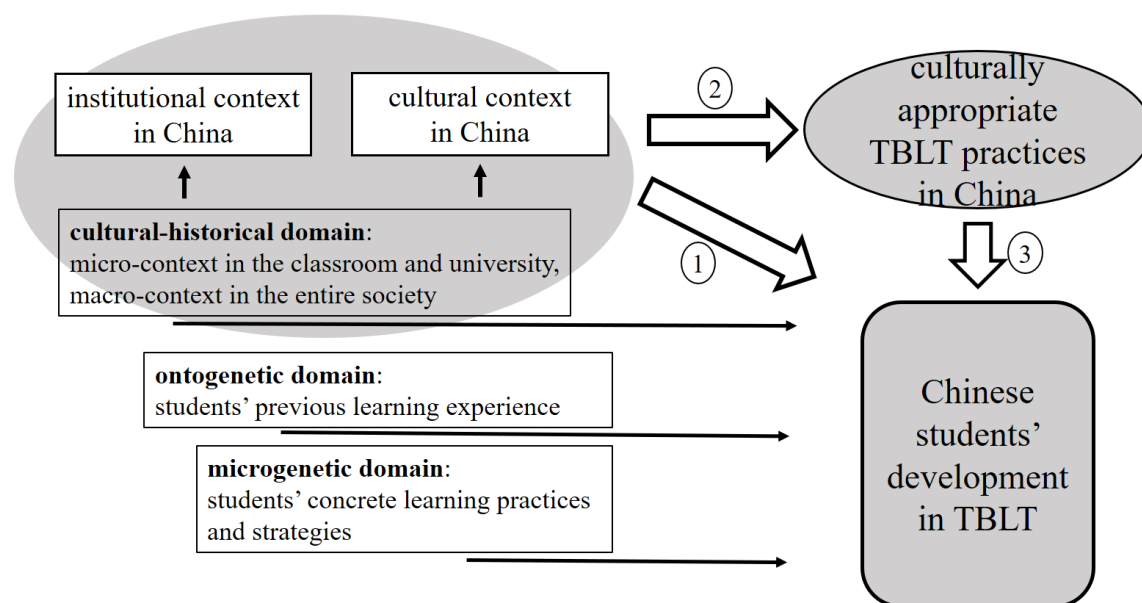


Figure 3.5 Theoretical framework underpinned by sociocultural theory

Underpinned by sociocultural theory, this framework analyses the cultural-historical domain, ontogenetic domain, and microgenetic domain in the students' language development in TBLT. The genetic method thus helps us to explore Chinese students' development by simultaneously investigating the students' current attitudes and practices, their previous learning experiences, and the sociocultural contexts. This constitutes the bottom half of Figure 3.5. Furthermore, according to the sociocultural concept of mediation by artefacts, the Chinese context also mediates the institutional and cultural artefacts that Chinese students can employ to facilitate their language learning, and thus it determines their language development. The arrow labelled with the number 1 represents this mediation. In addition to mediating students' development, these institutional and cultural artefacts also mediate the implementation of TBLT practices in the Chinese context and thus determine the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. The arrow labelled with the number 2 illustrates this influence and simultaneously displays the research aim of the current study. Finally, the culturally appropriate TBLT practices developed in the Chinese classrooms aim to enhance Chinese students' language learning as the ultimate research goal. The arrow labelled with the number 3 reveals this relation. In conclusion, this theoretical framework underpins the investigation of the two research questions, which are focus on impact of TBLT on Chinese students' language learning and the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China that seek to develop Chinese students' language learning.

3.2. Conceptual Framework of the Current Study

After establishing the theoretical framework underpinned by the two concepts of sociocultural theory, the researcher further constructed a conceptual framework to serve as a guide for what to examine in pursuit of culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese cultural context. This conceptual framework was established based on the theoretical framework as discussed in subsection 3.1, and it was extended to discuss the specific aspects to which the researcher would pay attention during the adjustments of TBLT practices based on the literature review regarding the implementation of TBLT in China.

As discussed in subsection 2.2, the institutional and cultural contexts in China cause some Chinese students' challenges in their development of four key learning aspects. In order to address Chinese students' difficulties, the present study further explored the influence of the Chinese context on Chinese students' learning in TBLT, and then it adjusted the culturally appropriate TBLT practices to suit the Chinese contexts and to facilitate Chinese students' learning. Therefore, the requirements of student development in these learning aspects show congruity with the ultimate research aim of the current study in that they both lie in Chinese students' development in language learning with culturally appropriate TBLT practices. Based on the theoretical framework underpinned by sociocultural theory, the option of four significant learning aspects further instructed what to investigate in the proposed pedagogic innovation. Therefore, the figure below shows the conceptual framework for this study.

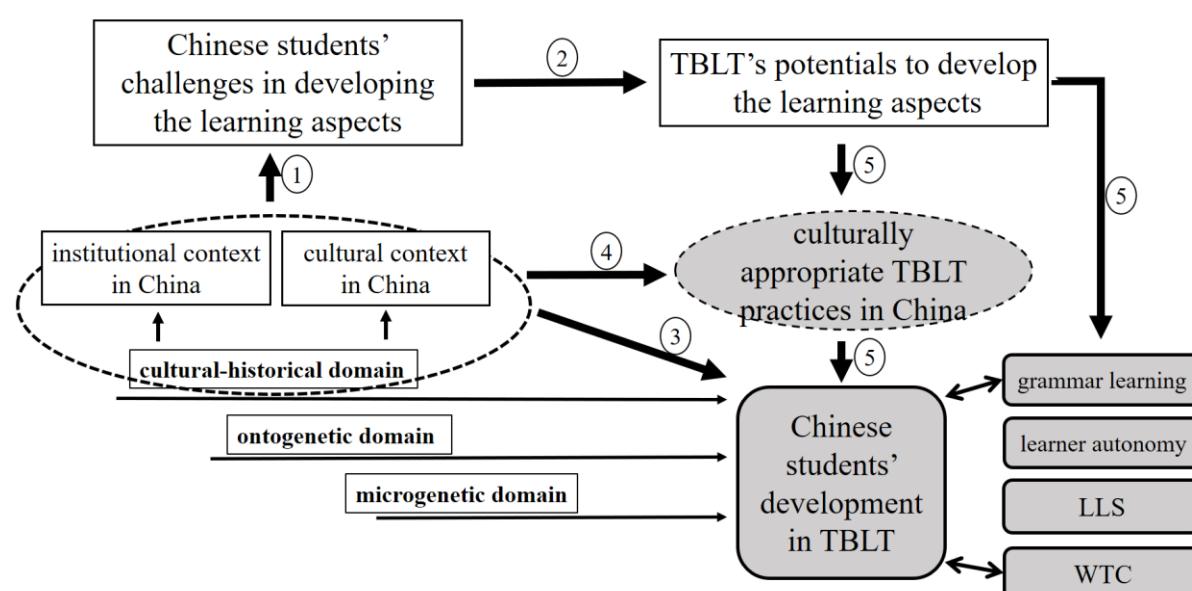


Figure 3.6. Conceptual framework underpinned by sociocultural theory

Specifically, the institutional and cultural contexts in China create challenges for Chinese students in developing the learning aspects (see Arrow 1 in Figure 3.6). These challenges can be resolved by the TBLT practices that hold potential to develop students' development in learning aspects (see Arrow 2 in Figure 3.6). In the actual task-based classes, simultaneously, students employ institutional and cultural artefacts to develop these learning aspects, so that these sociocultural artefacts also affect the impact of TBLT practices on students' development of these learning aspects (see Arrow 3 in Figure 3.6). In order to maximise the benefit of TBLT so as to enhance students' development of these learning aspects, therefore, the researcher must explore the culturally appropriate TBLT practices (see Arrow 4 in Figure 3.6) to guarantee students' development (see Arrow 5 in Figure 3.6). Furthermore, in the process of language learning in TBLT, analysis of the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural-historical domains will help report students' development in detail. In conclusion, this conceptual framework underpinned by sociocultural theory guided the entire study in order to explore the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China that would enhance Chinese students' development in four learning aspects.

3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher primarily developed and detailed a theoretical framework that integrated two major concepts of sociocultural theory in order to guide the pedagogic innovation of TBLT in the Chinese instructional and cultural contexts. Based on this theoretical framework, the researcher then proposed a conceptual framework that incorporates the theoretical framework as well as the four learning aspects investigated in order to examine the cultural appropriateness of the adjusted TBLT practices in the study.

The theoretical framework claims that when teachers apply foreign practices in local contexts, the practices need to be modified so that they become hybrid practices, where the teachers could consider the influences of the sociocultural contexts. The theoretical framework primarily applies to the sociocultural concept of mediation by artefacts in that the Chinese context also mediates the institutional and cultural artefacts employed by Chinese students to facilitate their language learning, and thus that context determines their language development. This framework thus guides the intervention designed to adjust culturally appropriate TBLT practices to maximise the positive impact of the Chinese context on Chinese students' language learning. Moreover, this framework also utilises the genetic

method to analyse the cultural-historical domain, the ontogenetic domain, and the microgenetic domain in regards to students' language development in TBLT. The genetic method thus helps explore and analyse Chinese students' development by simultaneously investigating the students' current attitudes and practices, their previous learning experiences, and the sociocultural contexts. In conclusion, by integrating the two concepts of sociocultural theory, this theoretical framework helps explore Chinese students' language learning from procedural and sociocultural perspectives and allows the possibility of demonstrating Chinese students' concrete learning perceptions and practices in detail.

Moreover, the conceptual framework assisted the researcher in determining that the pedagogic innovation should consider various learning aspects so as to guarantee the cultural appropriateness of the teaching methods. In terms of where the teachers should focus their attention in the actual implementation of TBLT for assisting the students' language learning, the second section in this chapter constructed the conceptual framework to examine some key learning aspects. It would be beyond the scope of this study to examine learning aspects very broadly. Therefore, the framework only focused on grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategies, and willingness to communicate. These four learning aspects were selected for this examination because of their significance in language learning and the demonstrated opportunity to enhance them in TBLT. The challenges facing Chinese students to develop these learning aspects have been investigated in previous studies, and these have required TBLT implementers to consider the influence of the sociocultural context in China. This conceptual framework thus helps the researcher as well as the TBLT implementers in China from two perspectives: (1) to select the major foci about which the adjusted TBLT practices can benefit Chinese learners' language learning; and (2) to integrate the rationales of TBLT and the Chinese learning contexts during the implementation of TBLT.

The construction of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks is a significant contribution of the current study to the research in pedagogic innovation. This provides both theoretical and practical guidelines for those future researchers who aim to import teaching methods from other cultures into their own cultures. Initially, in terms of 'how' to investigate, the theoretical framework in the current study helps future researchers to hold a sociocultural view about the pedagogical innovation. As discussed above, the theoretical framework guides the integration of sociocultural contexts into the pedagogic implementation. This has indeed been investigated by previous researchers (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Pham & Renshaw, 2015). The

current study, however, provides empirical evidence to confirm the rationality of this integration, and it simultaneously offers details of how to consider the sociocultural contexts in the implementation of teaching methods by exploring the influence of sociocultural factors. Furthermore, in terms of ‘what’ to investigate, the conceptual framework in the current study helps future researchers to hold a holistic view about pedagogic innovation. The literature review discussed in this chapter shows that most researchers merely focus on one learning aspect in their research into examining the benefits of TBLT. The conceptual framework in the present study, however, contributes a holistic practice to simultaneously investigate various learning aspects in the implementation of a teaching method. This will help future researchers confirm multiple units of analysis and a holistic lens for interpreting data.

Chapter 4 Methodology

The research employed design-based research as the main methodology, and conducted a mixed-method research in data collection and analysis. This chapter first discusses the design-based research which is deployed as the main methodology in the present study. It will then present the selection of the sites, target unit and participants. The third section explains the methods used to collect and analyse the data of the study.

4.1. Design-based Research

To develop culturally appropriate practices of TBLT in Chinese classrooms, this study utilised design-based research as the main methodology. This methodology is designed by and for educators that seek to increase the impact, transfer and translation of education research into improved practice (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). It helps educational researchers and teachers bridge the gap between academic research and practical lessons. Štemberger and Cencič (2014) argue that design-based research can contribute to the improvement of practice through its numerous refinements of innovations in the educational field, and it can also examine the efficiency of these introductions in various learning environments. Štemberger and Cencič (2014) also suggest the fundamental process of a design-based research, namely, analysis of problems from practice, development of innovation for solving problems in lessons, iterative cycles of testing and refining innovations in lessons and finally, reflections on a theoretical production of innovations and its implementation into lessons. The study aimed to explore how the TBLT approach could be applied in English classes of Chinese universities in a culturally and institutionally appropriate manner. For this purpose, the research was driven by the cyclical process of design-based study including Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, in which the researcher introduced TBLT to English classes of Chinese universities and revised the pedagogic practices based on findings in the previous cycle.

Specifically, the selection and arrangement of three cycles in the current study are justified as follows. From the perspective of design-based research, the more cycles the researcher can implement, with more problems explored and addressed, the researcher would refine the process more and produce the pedagogical practices better (Pool & Laubscher, 2016). It is thus difficult to know when (or if ever) the design-based research is perfectly completed (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In the current study, therefore, TBLT practices were

implemented, revised, and then were further adapted by the local context, there was not a limit to how many cycles that the researcher could employ. Some researchers (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Pool & Laubscher, 2016), however, have discussed how many cycles are sufficient to produce valid and significant outcomes. Traditionally, researchers have suggested that the research validity can only be guaranteed if numerous iterations are executed (Hakkarainen, 2009; Plomp, 2013; Van den Akker, 2007), but the design-based research should not be restrained to long-term projects (Pool & Laubscher, 2016). Only if the three core stages, namely investigation, design and evaluation (Reeves, 2006), are completed, a design-based research could generate valid outcomes. Guided by the discussion of precious researchers, three cycles were identified as appropriate and manageable due to the time constraints and scope of this study. In addition, to strengthen the research validity for this study, the researcher designed and conducted the three cycles to concur with the three core stages proposed by previous studies. The details of the three cycles will be presented in the following section.

4.2. Design of the Current Study

The study aimed to explore how the TBLT approach could be applied in English classes of Chinese universities in a culturally and institutionally appropriate manner. For this purpose, the research was driven by the cyclical process of design-based study including Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, in which the researcher implemented TBLT in the Chinese context. Specifically, Cycle 1 consisted of the design of culturally appropriate TBLT practices based on suggestions of previous studies in the literature review. Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 were the intervention stages where the researcher implemented and adapted the adjusted TBLT practices in an iterative process.

In Cycle 1, the researcher adjusted TBLT practices based on findings of previous relevant studies reported in the literature. The researcher used what had been found in the literature about TBLT to develop TBLT practices in a manner that could work in the Chinese classrooms. These adjustments, therefore, are elaborated in Chapter 2, in the subsections about how TBLT practices assist Chinese students' development in different learning aspects. Specifically, these adjustments included two types. Firstly, in the literature review, some previous studies described the specific procedures to apply TBLT practices to develop Chinese students' development. Therefore, based on the review of these studies, Cycle 1 directly applied these teaching proposals to adjust the TBLT practices in this study. The four

TBLT practices to teach grammar, as discussed in the subsection 2.2.1, can be categorised in this type. Secondly, some other adjustments of TBLT practices designed in Cycle 1 were deduced and analysed from different studies. For example, the simultaneous application of one-way tasks and two-way tasks to enhance students' WTC, as discussed at the end of subsection 2.2.4, combined different findings from different studies.

Then in Cycle 2, the researcher applied a set of culturally appropriate TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 in English classes in China. This cycle aimed to explore in details how the adjusted TBLT practices could suit the Chinese context and benefit Chinese students' English learning. Specifically, Cycle 2 aimed to primarily explore the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices. These benefits could confirm the effectiveness of the TBLT practices adjusted in Cycle 1. Findings obtained in Cycle 2 also provided practical evidence to consolidate the need to make these adjustments in Cycle 1. In addition, results in Cycle 2 also displayed some new problems that had not been seen in Cycle 1. These issues were not mentioned in the previous studies partly because they reflected the mismatches between the TBLT rationales and the Chinese classroom settings. The researcher then designed some further adjustments of TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2 to address these problems. In summary, findings obtained in Cycle 2 initially proved the appropriateness of the adjustments of TBLT practices designed in Cycle 1, and further drove the development of strategies to allow TBLT practices culturally appropriate to the Chinese context in Cycle 3.

Cycle 3 was the final stage of this design-based research and aimed to solve all problems discovered in the previous two cycles. Initially, similar to in Cycle 2, the researcher applied the adjusted TBLT practices designed in the previous cycle in Cycle 3. The benefits of these TBLT practices in Chinese students' language learning revealed that these practices were culturally adaptive to the Chinese context. Additionally, Cycle 3 also revealed some newly observed problems facing Chinese teachers and students in the implementation of TBLT. New adjustments for the TBLT practices were then proposed at the end of Cycle 3 to address these problems.

In summary, underpinned by the framework of design-based research, the study included three theoretical and practical cycles as mapped in Figure 4.1 below:

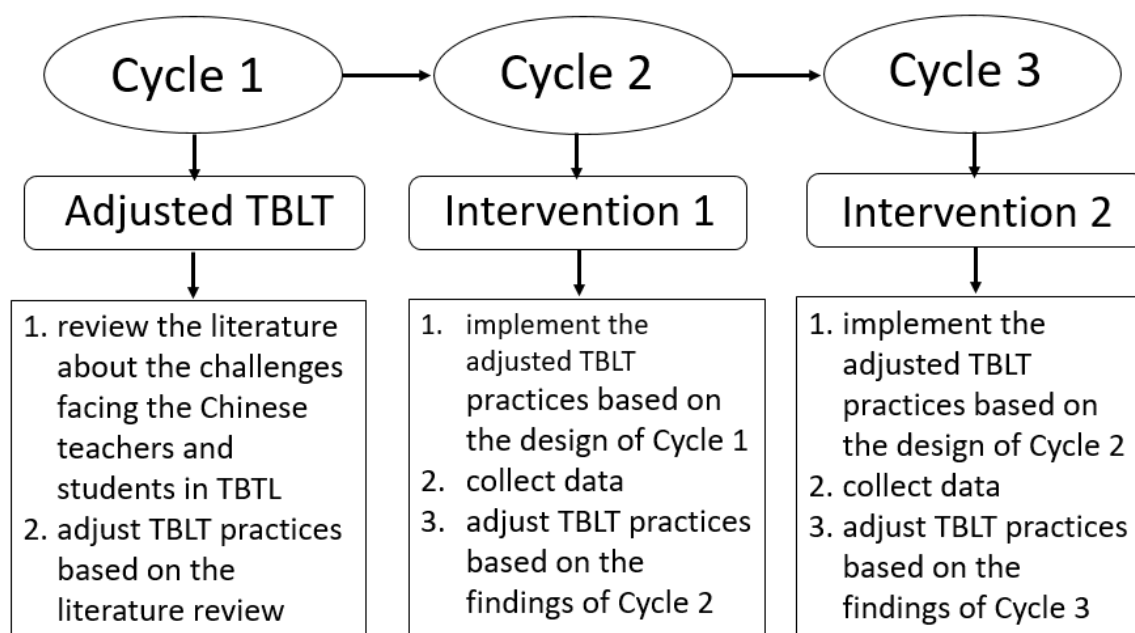


Figure 4.1 Three cycles of the present study

4.3. Research Sites, Target Unit and Participants

The present research was conducted in EFL classes in one Chinese university, Shandong Youth University of Political Science, located in the eastern part of China. The university as the site of the study has been selected using purposeful sampling, and the students as the participants were selected with the same principle. In purposeful sampling, participants or sites are selected based on the consideration that they are information rich (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the selection of the university was based on the following three basic criteria: (1) the university was where the researcher has been working for several years, so its syllabus and teaching context were familiar to the researcher; (2) University English was a compulsory course in the university, taken by all students in different majors during the first four semesters; and (3) the students in the university were from different regions of the country, and in their College Entrance Examination, they had different scores of English. This showed that the target participants were diverse in their social and cultural backgrounds and proficiency levels of English.

This research was conducted in the unit called University English offered to second year students in different majors. The main objective of the course is to foster students' comprehensive English competence ranging from writing and reading to listening and speaking. The teaching material in this unit is New Standard College English (Integrated

Course) as required by the Ministry of Education, which includes 10 modules (defined as “units” in China’s universities) with three major parts, the introduction, the texts and the exercises. The texts in the books cover some daily topics like life, learning and emotions, as well as some in-depth topics like politics, economics, history, culture and science. The assessment method for this unit consist of two examinations, namely, the mid-term exam and the final exam in each semester. Each exam includes several sections for listening, speaking, reading, translation and writing. Two classes for each week are provided for the unit, and 32 classes for the entire 16 weeks in one semester constitute the unit.

The research was conducted in one academic semester between the year of 2017 and 2018. The researcher started Cycle 1 before the beginning of the semester in September, and conducted Cycle 2 in the first half of the semester. After Cycle 2, a 3-week mid-term break allowed the researcher to redesign TBLT practices to solve the remaining and newly-explored problems in the previous cycles. Finally, the researcher conducted Cycle 3 in the second half of the semester. Table 4.1 shows the timeline for this design-based research.

Table 4.1 Timeline for the design-based research

Cycles in the study	Dates	Amounts of classes
Cycle 1	Jul.1 -- Aug.31	
Cycle 2	Sep.4 -- Oct.31	15 classes
Mid-term break	Nov.1 -- Nov.19	5 classes = nearly 3 weeks
Cycle 3	Nov.20 -- Jan.17	16 classes

As shown in Table 4.1, the researcher implemented the revised TBLT practices in 31 classes in total during Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. Each class lasted for two hours, with two parts of one class and a ten-minute break in between. Instructed by Willis’s (1996) proposed procedures of TBLT, each task-based class covered three major stages, as shown in Table 4.2, while the time distribution changed in some classes due to the practical situation, students were required to complete most tasks in 40 minutes.

Table 4.2 Timeline for 31 task-based classes

Stages of TBLT	Duration of the stages	Activities in the stages
Pre-task stage	20 minutes	☛ task explanation
		☛ language input
		☛ language strategies instruction
Task cycle stage	60 minutes	40 minutes: task performance
		20 minutes: students' presentation
Break	10 minutes	
Language focus stage	30 minutes	☛ Students: revision, asking questions
		☛ Teacher: feedback, instruction

A total of 122 undergraduate students from two classes (each class had 61 students) were invited as the participants. They were sophomores in four different majors, electronic information engineering, art design, public affairs administration and international trade. The students were from different regions of the country and had different scores of English competencies. This aimed to ensure the diversity in the participants' social and cultural backgrounds and proficiency levels of English.

Ten students (five from each class) were selected as a focus group to provide more in-depth analysis. The recruitment of the ten focused participants followed the purposeful sampling approach. The researcher explained the selection criterion to all 122 participants in the two classes, and calling for volunteering participation. The only criterion to be met was that the ten participants should demonstrate different geographic background and different English proficiency levels.

After being recruited and interviewed, each focus participant signed the participation approvals for the study (See Appendix A for the Participants' Consent Form). The following table provides a summary of the profile of them:

Table 4.3 Overview of focused participants

Participant ^a	Class	Age	Gender	Major	English score in College-entrance-ex amination ^b	Score in the College English Test Band 4 ^c	Language proficiency level ^d
Chen	1	19	Male	art design	128	549	High
Cui	1	20	Male	public affairs administration	63	275	Low
Gao	1	20	Female	public affairs administration	97	469	Medium
Li	1	20	Female	art design	94	476	Medium
Ma	1	19	Female	public affairs administration	136	587	High
Sun	2	19	Female	electronic information engineering	79	389	Low

Participant ^a	Class	Age	Gender	Major	English score in College-entrance-ex amination ^b	Score in the College English Test Band 4 ^c	Language proficiency level ^d
Wang	2	20	Male	international trade	104	490	Medium
Yang	2	21	Female	electronic information engineering	131	573	High
Zhang	2	20	Male	international trade	112	501	Medium
Zhao	2	20	Male	international trade	84	382	Low

a: All names are pseudonyms.

b: out of a maximum of 150.

c: out of a maximum of 710.

d: the relative proficiency level compared with other focused participants.

4.4. Data Collection

The present research was a mixed-method research. The data gathering methods used were both quantitative and qualitative, including quantitative questionnaires, semi-structured individual interviews, students' weekly guided journals, students' sample work and audiotapes of their task performance. Given the large sample size of 122 students, questionnaires were used to capture the experiences and perspectives of a large number of students quantitatively using Likert scales. The participants answered the questionnaires after each cycle. During the two intervention cycles, a smaller focused group of ten students was used to provide more depth data through the use of interviews and journal entries, as well as audiotaped task performance. Sample work from all 122 students was collected.

4.4.1. Qualitative Data Collection

The methods for qualitative data collection in the present study are explained as follows.

Semi-structured individual interviews: Interviews were conducted with ten focused students after each intervention cycle was completed. This method was intended as a tool to explore participants' perceived problems in their English learning in TBLT and their understanding of the benefits of the revised TBLT practices. In this study, all interviews were audiotaped. The interview forms contained instructions related to the interview process and the questions asked. Some sample interview questions with the student participants were provided as follows (See Appendix B): "Compared with the traditional language teaching methods, what do you think is the most obvious difference in TBLT when you are learning grammar structures? What do you think is the most difficult when you are performing the tasks together with your classmates? Which part of the task today do you think facilitated your understanding of English culture most?" The interviews were conducted in Chinese to allow the participants to express their perceptions more accurately and openly, and the preliminary analysis went through member checking for reliability to minimize the misinterpretation of the participants' responses,.

The students' guided journal records: In addition to interviews, the ten focused participants in the two classes were also invited to write weekly guided journals throughout the two intervention cycles based on the prompts. The prompts were intended to guide the student participants to reflect on their learning experiences related to TBLT approach in the English classes, which could provide some evidence for the problems of TBLT in teaching

English as well as for students' perceived benefits of the revised TBLT practices. The scanned copies of the students' journals were collected at the end of each week. With the help of guided journals, the researcher gained insights into the participants' grammar learning in the tasks. The questions in the guided journals required the students to provide detailed description on their grammar learning (See Appendix C), such as "Give specific and detailed example for the greatest challenge you met in your tasks." Or "What types of language input do you need the teacher to provide in the future to facilitate your learning in the tasks? Please illustrate detailed examples."

The students' sample work: Student participants' sample work to complete tasks were also gathered to tap into their practices and processes of improving their learning in TBLT, evidencing the appropriateness of the revised TBLT practices. The sample work represented work in the form of translation, oral presentation or writing composition. All the sample work was collected according to the specific task performance, either after or before each class, either done by an individual student or a group of students.

The students' audiotaped task performance: Audiotaping was used to record discussions between the ten focused participants (and their group partners) during their task performance. In general, audiotapes reported verbal interactions that the students used in conversations. Because one of the main objectives of this study was to investigate the impact of TBLT practices on students' language learning, the researcher emphasised evidences showing the students' development in the four learning aspects, such as their usage of language knowledge, consciousness of autonomous learning, usage of language learning strategies and willingness to communicate in English. To audiotape discussions of the focus groups, the researcher placed a smart phone with recorder program on the table for the duration of the small-group tasks.

4.4.2. Quantitative Data Collection

The researcher collected quantitative data from three questionnaires conducted respectively at the end of the three cycles. The questionnaires used the 5-point-Likert-scale questions to investigate the students' insights into the effectiveness of the adjusted TBLT practices in helping them develop their language learning. Guided by the conceptual framework in terms of combining the learning aspects into the adjustments of TBLT practices, the questionnaires consisted of four major parts, which investigated the four learning aspects respectively.

The first two parts of the questionnaires aimed to investigate the students' development in grammar learning and learner autonomy respectively. The researcher designed some questions to explore the students' development in grammar learning and learner autonomy. The questionnaires required the students to answer the questions by choosing answers from "strongly agree" (5 point) to "strongly disagree" (1 point). Some sample questions were provided as follows (See Appendix D and E): "After teacher's feedback on my usage of the grammatical knowledge, I feel more endured about the correct usage." or "I think using English to solve problems in tasks increases my confidence in this language."

In addition, in terms of the other two learning aspects, namely language learning strategies (LLS) and willingness to communicate (WTC), the researcher applied some revised questionnaires of the learning aspects designed by previous researchers in these fields. These parts of questionnaires will be presented in the following details.

4.4.2.1. LLS Questionnaire

The third part of the questionnaires aimed to collect data for the genuine situation of Chinese learners' LLS use before and after the adjusted TBLT practices via Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990). Version 7.0 of the SILL was used, in which 50 items were presented to elicit information on LLS usage from EFL learners. The 50 items included all the six categories of LLS, and the detailed information for the 50 items were:

Table 4.4 Detailed information for the 50-item LLS questionnaire

Item number	Categories of strategies	Amount of items
1-9	Memory strategies	9
10-23	Cognitive strategies	14
24-29	Compensatory strategies	6
30-38	Metacognitive strategies	9

39-44	Affective strategies	6
45-50	Social strategies	6

Since the current study explored culturally appropriate TBLT practices as classroom pedagogy innovations, some questionnaire items were paraphrased to better describe the authentic teaching and learning context of English classes of Chinese universities. Specifically, some items presented the learning process outside the classroom leaning, which could not provide suggestive information for the actual implementation of TBLT in classes, they were paraphrased into learning process inside the classroom context. For instance, item 34 “I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English” was rewritten as “I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to complete my tasks”, item 46 “I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk” was rewritten as “I ask my partner(s) to correct me when I talk”, item 48 “I ask for help from English speakers” was revised into “I ask for help from my partner(s)”. In addition, some items such as item 11 “I try to talk to native English speakers”, item 15 “I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English”, item 16 “I read for pleasure in English” were deleted from the questionnaire, for they were not really associated with the classroom learning. Therefore, the adjusted version for SILL used in the current study comprised 47 items, as shown in Appendix F.

The SILL used in the current study was a self-scoring questionnaire containing the 47 items. Before the questionnaires were assigned to the participants for the first time, brief guidelines and instructions were provided to guarantee their understanding of all the items. The participants were required to choose one answer from the 5-point-Likert-scale responses, namely, 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The SILL, therefore, reports the participants’ frequency of LLS use. Oxford (1990) also put forward a criterion that the mean of all participants for one item of 3.5-5.0 indicates high use of that LLS, 2.5-3.4 medium use and 1.0-2.4 low use.

4.4.2.2. WTC Questionnaire

The final part of the three questionnaires applied in this study was a WTC questionnaire, which adopted 10 questionnaire items designed by Peng and Woodrow (2010). There are

indeed some different WTC questionnaires applied by previous researchers to examine students' WTC levels (e.g., MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmon, 1987). The current study applied the 10-item WTC questionnaire due to the following reasons. It was originally proposed by Weaver (2005) and further proved its validity and reliability by Peng and Woodrow (2010). Compared with other WTC questionnaires, it was more recently established and confirmed. Besides, the items in this questionnaire focused on learners' communication in the target language in their language classroom, rather than in their actual daily life. Therefore, the researcher chose this questionnaire to examine Chinese students' development in WTC during their participation into the classroom tasks.

Participants were required to assess their attitudes to their WTC during their task performance, on a Likert-scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The details for the WTC questionnaire used in this study was presented in Appendix G.

4.5. Data Analysis

4.5.1. Data Analysis in Design-based Research

Since this study is a design-based research, the data obtained from the previous cycle informed the researcher how to further modify the TBLT practices in next cycle (Collins, Joseph & Bielaczyc, 2004). Thus in this cyclical process of designing and revising TBLT practices, the data were also collected and analysed in an iterative method. It involved a simultaneous process of data analysis while the data were collected. The previously collected and analysed data guided the proceeding revision of TBLT practices, and data collection on one theme indeed went back and forth in pursuit of the detailed information.

For instance, one focused participant's guided journal in Cycle 2 showed "I tend to frequently use Chinese to perform tasks. I know it's a bad habit, but it's a long way to get rid of my mother tongue's influence when I'm speaking English." After analysing this dilemma, to explore the sociocultural factors leading to Chinese students' L1 usage, the researcher asked the participants about their perceived reasons for their L1 usage in their interviews after Cycle 2. One participant responded: "I'm used to teachers' explanation of some English expressions in Chinese in our previous classes, so my usage of Chinese is natural when I'm thinking of some English expressions." Data analysis on this answer concluded the reason for students' L1 usage as the integrated language usage in traditional teaching. Therefore, to

avoid participants' L1 usage in their task performance, in Cycle 3, the researcher revised TBLT practices in terms of the method to provide language input. Rather than directly explaining and translating the English expressions with Chinese as in the traditional teaching method, the researcher initially presented materials with intended English expressions to students, followed by the paraphrasing of these language inputs in English. Besides, the researcher also instructed the students to resolve a communication problem by meaning negotiations (Slimani - Rolls, 2005). Whenever they found difficulties to communicate in English, they were instructed to employ clarification request, confirmation check, comprehension check and repair for expressions to promote their task performance. Finally, in the interviews after Cycle 3, participants were again asked about their reduced L1 usage in this cycle. Their perceived benefits of these revised TBLT practices included: "Teacher's paraphrase of English expressions helps us fully understand them and better use them." "When I don't know how to express in English, I no longer turn to Chinese, instead, I try to paraphrase my intended meaning in another way, and to ask my partner's help. In this way, I develop my confidence in communicating in English and master more language knowledge. I'm quite excited." Until now, this simultaneous and iterative process of data collection and data analysis came into an end, which can be illustrated in the figure as below.

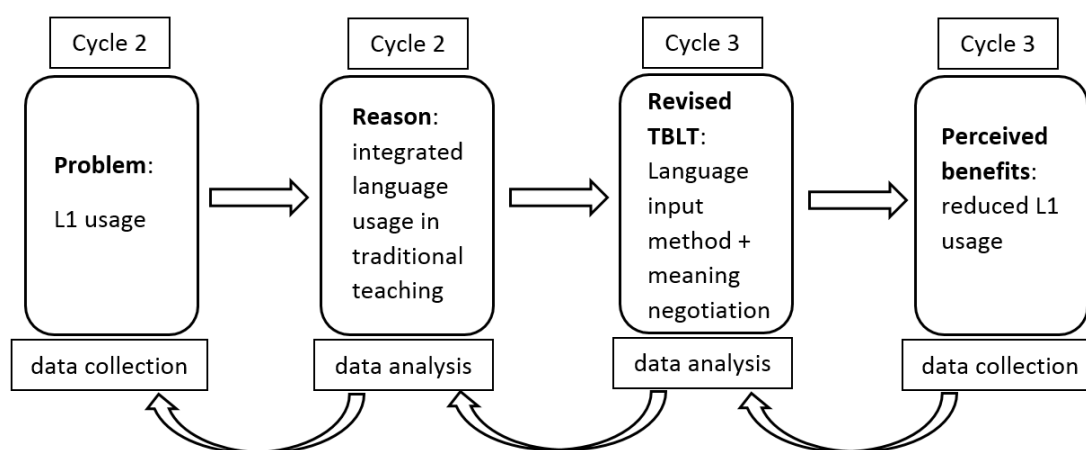


Figure 4.2 Data analysis in design-based research

4.5.2. Genetic Method of Data Analysis

Because as discussed in Chapter 3, the current study adopted a theoretical framework of Vygotskian genetic method to understand the participants' development as the history of behaviour. Data analysis in the two intervention cycles thus employed the genetic-analytic

approach designed by Cross (2010). Cross's genetic-analytic approach was selected because it analyses the reasons for students' behaviours from three diverse domains, and discloses the socio-cultural-historic factors that influence students' development. This approach is thus compatible with the research aim of this study to explore the influence of the Chinese context on Chinese students' language learning in TBLT. Qualitative data collected in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 were categorised into three domains of genetic analysis, as shown in Table 4.5. Each data set was then analysed in thematic analysis according to their themes, as elaborated in next subsection 4.5.3.

Table 4.5 Data collection instruments and focus of genetic data collection and analysis

Genetic domains	Data collection instruments	Focus of data collection and analysis
Ontogenetic	Semi-structured interview	Personal background
		Experience in learning in TBLT
		Experience in grammar learning
	Guided journal	Experience in autonomous learning
		Experience in language learning strategy usage
		Experience in communication in English
Cultural-historic	Semi-structured interview	Local context:
	Guided journal	Peer students in pairs/groups
		Task-based English classes

		Institutional context:
		Examination system
		University English as a subject in curriculum
		English learning goals
		Sociocultural context:
		Opportunities for English communication
		Chinese culture about learning, collaboration, examination, teacher authority, etc.
		Perceptions of TBLT
		Challenges in task performance
Microgenetic	Semi-structured interview	Evidence of language mastery
	Guided journal	Evidence of development in learner autonomy
	Audiotape	Evidence of usage of LLS
	Sample work	Evidence of development in WTC

Data collection in this study encompassed three domains of the genetic method in sociocultural theory: ontogenetic, cultural-historical and microgenetic domains. Specifically, the ontogenetic data generated through the participants' interview and guided journal

responses had a focus on the students' background and previous learning experiences. The ontogenetic data thus aimed to help explore what the students brought to the task-based classes with their own experiences and how their language learning developed in a historic progress. Data in this domain thus answered the Research Question 1 about the impact of TBLT on Chinese students' language learning and question 2.2 about the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. In addition, the cultural-historic data were also collected from the participants' interview and guided journal responses. These data helped understand the social, cultural and historic context of the students' task performance in TBLT. The context could integrate the micro-local-context inside the classes, meso-institutional-context that encompassed the examination and curriculum policies as well as the language learning goals, and the macro-sociocultural-context that determined multiple cultures among the students. Data in this domain thus directly answered the Research Question 2.1 about Chinese socio-cultural factors influencing students' learning in TBLT and also guided the adjustments of culturally appropriate TBLT practices in question 2.2 and thus contributed to the investigation of question 1. Finally, the students' interview and guided journal responses, audiotapes of task performance and sample work also contributed the microgenetic data. These data were analysed with a focus on the participants' engagement in their concrete activities in relation to their immediate sociocultural context in TBLT. The microgenetic data thus recorded how the students perceived both their achievement and challenges in TBLT, and provided detailed description about their development in language learning. Data in this domain, as the ontogenetic data, also answered the Research Question 1 and 2.2. Therefore, Table 4.6 below shows how the data in the three genetic domains answered the diverse research questions.

Table 4.6 Relationships between genetic analytic data and the research questions

	Ontogenetic data	Cultural-historic data	Microgenereric data
Research questions	the students' background and previous learning experiences	socio-cultural-historic context of the students' task performance	the students' task performance and development in language learning

1	√	√	√
2.1		√	
2.2	√	√	√

In summary, the genetic analytical approach adopted in the two intervention cycles analysed the ontogenetic, cultural-historic and microgenetic data in the students' task performance in TBLT. These data enabled the study to reveal various inter-related contextual factors influencing the participants' task performance in TBLT, and enlightened a historical perspective to explore the participants' language learning as a progress of human development.

4.5.3. Qualitative Data Analysis

Apart from genetic analysis, the researcher analysed the qualitative data in thematic analysis, the process of which can be divided into the following steps.

Gathering the data by using different methods, namely the participants' interview and guided journal answers, as well as their sample work and audiotapes of their task performance, during the semester when the study was conducted.

Preparing the data for analysis by transcribing the participants' interviews answers, guided journal answers and their audiotaped task performance, and scanning their sample work in paper. The students' interview answers and guided journal answers were in mixed languages – Chinese and English, hence English translation was needed. To ensure the accuracy of the data, member checking was employed. All interview and guided journal transcripts were approved by the ten focused participants.

Organising the data into file folders and computer files (interview answers, guided journals, students' sample work and audiotaped data), as well as keeping backup copies of all data.

Exploring the data by reading through them several times and writing notes on important or inspiring ideas in the margins.

Coding the data by hand, for themes including the students' feedback to TBLT practices, to their own task performance and to the social and contextual factors influencing the implementation of TBLT. So the thematic approach was conducted in the qualitative analysis stage. In addition, since the researcher was simultaneously the teacher and TBLT practitioner in this study, having been in the classes and spent great amount of time with the participants to collect the data, the researcher's "personal reflections about the meaning of the data" thus were included in the data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2012, p. 258). Consistent with the procedures of design-based research, which requires the researcher to reflect on a theoretical production of pedagogic innovations (Štemberger & Cencič, 2014), researcher' reflection on the data was also a contributor to the revision of TBLT practices in following revision and implementation.

Reporting findings in a narrative form and presenting interpretation of findings in a narrative discussion by analysing, relating or contrasting findings with findings of past studies, theories or literature, TBLT rationales, and Chinese context.

In conclusion, the qualitative data analysis process in this study can be shown as follows.

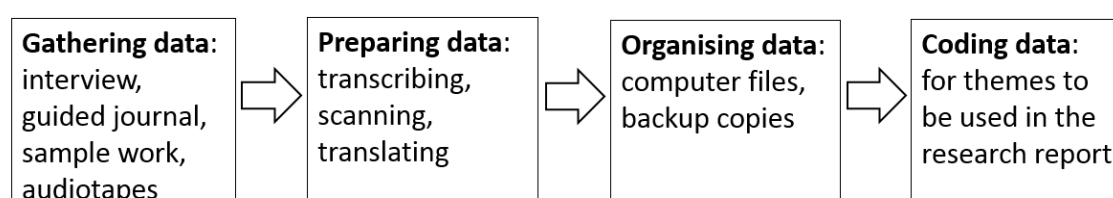


Figure 4.3 Process of qualitative data analysis, adapted from Creswell (2012, p. 237)

4.5.4. Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected in this study were in the main the participants' questionnaire answers. The participants were asked to circle their responses among five options on the 5-point Likert scales.

Specifically, the researcher initially assigned values to responses in the four parts of questionnaires as 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, and 1 =

Strongly Disagree, which referred to the step of “scoring data”. Then the data were entered into SPSS as the statistical program to transfer the data from the questionnaire responses to a computer file for analysis, in the step of “inputting data”. Then following most of the previous studies that investigated the students’ development in their language learning (e.g., Griffiths, 2003; Ji & Pham, 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Zou, 2011), the means (M) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated to investigate the participants’ perceptions, scores that students responded to the questions were compared in the three cycles. One example is explained as follows.

One question was designed to explore participants’ perception to the revised TBLT practices as: “I tend to turn to L1 usage when I’m facing some communicative problems during task performance.” In Cycle 3, the researcher trained the students how to negotiate meanings by using LRSs in the pre-task planning stage, so the data analysis for this questionnaire item showed a significant difference between students’ answers after the two cycles.

Table 4.7 Differences in the students’ perceptions towards L1 usage after Cycle 2 and Cycle

3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
n=122	n=122	T	p
M(SD)	M(SD)		
4.03 (0.74)	2.73 (0.68)	2.41	.02

The mean value showed that in Cycle 2, students agreed with this item (M=4.03, SD=0.74), whereas with the revised TBLT practices in Cycle 3, they slightly disagreed with this question (M=2.73, SD=0.68), indicating the reduction in their L1 usage during task performance. The t-test result showed that there was a significant difference in the students’ perceptions after the two cycles towards this question ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3 by changing students’ attitudes toward language usage during their task performance.

In summary, Table 4.8 shows the data collection and data analysis procedures in this study.

Table 4.8 Data collection and analysis

Research question	Data collection instrument	Participants	Analysis procedure
	Questionnaire	all participants	t-test
RQ1	semi-structured interview	10 focused participants	thematic analysis
	guided journal		genetic analysis
RQ2	semi-structured interview	10 focused participants	
	guided journal		thematic analysis
	Audiotape		genetic analysis
	sample work	all participants	

4.6. Ethics

Ethical consideration should be emphasised in empirical studies to maintain the validity in data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). This study received ethical approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee in Australia before the researcher began collecting data from the participants. Based on Patton's (2002) ethical issue checklist, three issues relevant to this study were considered during the data collection and after the finding dissemination. This section will present these issues: the need to inform the participants of benefits or risks of participation in the research, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, as well as the participants' confidentiality, anonymity and access to the results.

The participants' consent was obtained before the data collection stage. All the 122 participants were informed of the questionnaires they would answer during the semester. In terms of the ten focused participants, the researcher explained the intent and the procedures of the research to them in Chinese using simple language. The duration and procedure of data collection methods were also presented to the participants before the semester. Although they participated into the project voluntarily, they were told that they would benefit from the study since it would provide them with in-depth learning opportunities during which they could improve their English learning. The participants were assured that they could quit their participation at any stage of the study due to discomfort they might experience. Finally, they were promised that adequate respect would be shown to them, and that no ideas would be imposed on them.

This respect was also the foundation for the relationship between the researcher and the participants during the data collection process. Based on respect and trust, the researcher explained her role as a facilitator for learning and researcher for teaching. She used simple and friendly language to talk to the participants. During the interviews, the researcher allowed the participants to share their own experiences and real feelings with her rather than impose any ideas on the participants (Patton, 2002). The participants were also encouraged to pinpoint any challenge they would experience during their task-based learning, especially the challenges related to the teacher's instruction and support. They were assured that their criticism of the teacher-researcher would be welcomed and respected for the research purpose.

The students were told that their identity would not be disclosed to the public and that they would have access to a copy of all recorded raw data and to the publications based on the results of the research. Also, they were told that the data would be kept in a safe place and that no one except for the researchers of the project would have access to them.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter elaborates the research methodology in conducting the present study. The study was framed as a design-based research using a mixed-method to collect and analyse data. Guided with the underpinning sociocultural theory to research design, genetic method of data collection and analysis was also adopted, thus research questions and instruments were designed to investigate the cultural appropriateness of the adjusted TBLT practices in China.

Data were collected and triangulated through questionnaires, interviews, guided journals, sample work and audiotapes. The mixed quantitative and qualitative data, as well as the ethical consideration assisted to ensure the reliability of the current research.

PART THREE. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the thesis consists of two findings chapters: Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. The purpose of these two chapters is to report and analyse the research findings regarding the cultural appropriate TBLT practices in English classes of Chinese universities.

Underpinned by the framework of design-based research, the present study included three cycles to examine the cultural appropriate TBLT practices in the English classes of Chinese universities, as discussed in Chapter 4. Cycle 1 showed the adjustments of TBLT practices suggested by the literature review to develop Chinese students' language learning, which has been revealed in Chapter 2. Moreover, Chapter 5 and 6 will reveal findings of the two intervention cycles, namely, Cycle 2 and 3. The following figure maps the process of how the three chapters reveal the major findings.

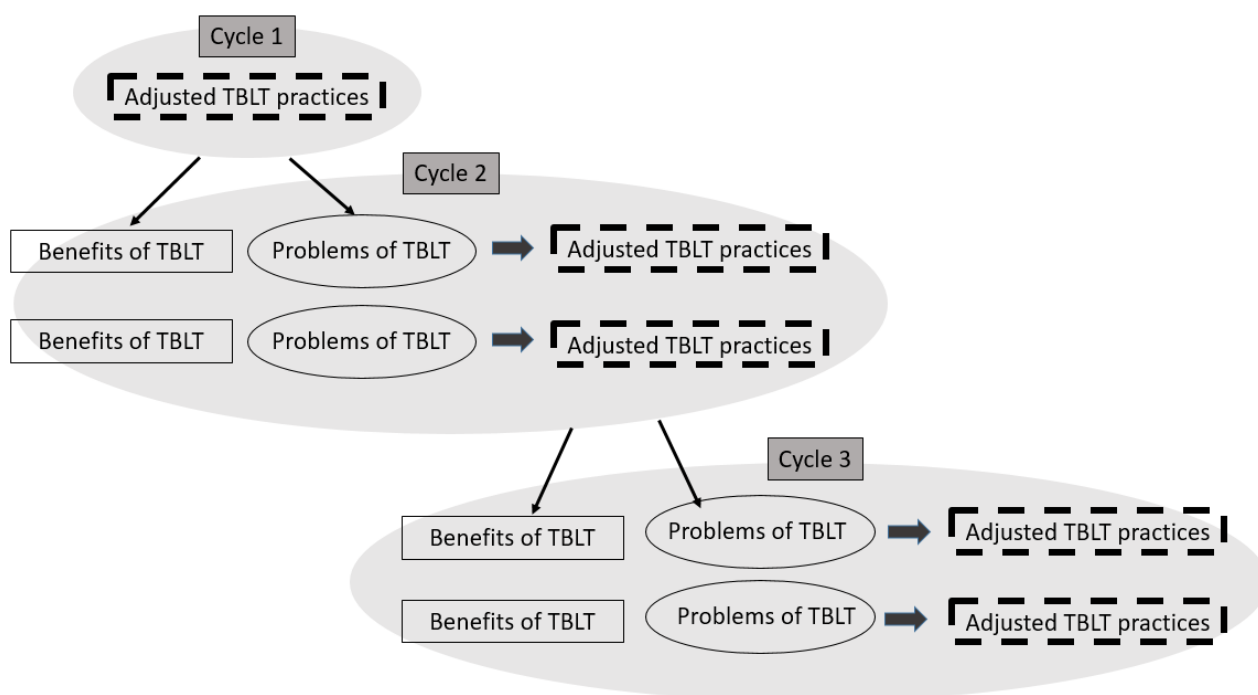


Figure 0.1 Organisation of Chapter 5 and 6

Specifically, based on the adjusted TBLT practices suggested by literature review, as shown

in Chapter 2, Chapter 5 will display the pedagogic intervention in Cycle 2. The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 in this intervention cycle, and initially figured out some benefits of TBLT in Chinese students' language learning. Then Chapter 5 will also report the remaining and newly-recognised problems troubling the students in Cycle 2. To resolve all these problems, the researcher made some further adjustments of TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2. Chapter 5, therefore, will reveal the researcher's intervention in Cycle 2 in three major parts: benefits of TBLT, problems of TBLT and the further adjustments of TBLT. Chapter 6 will also encompass these three parts to reveal the pedagogic intervention in Cycle 3. Moreover, underpinned by the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3, the current study aimed to discover the students' development in the four learning aspects. Findings of the study in Chapter 5 and 6, therefore, will report the two intervention cycles in the design-based study in terms of these learning aspects.

Chapter 5 Cycle 2: Intervention 1

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 in the actual EFL classes of Chinese universities in Cycle 2. During this cycle, the researcher initially explored the benefits of TBLT regarding Chinese students' development in the learning aspects. These benefits help to prove the cultural appropriateness of the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1. During the actual implementation of the TBLT practices, however, the researcher also observed and analysed some problems facing the students in their development of the learning aspects. These problems then stimulated the further adjustments of TBLT practices as pedagogic intervention in Cycle 2. This chapter thus reports the implementation of the adjusted TBLT in English classes of Chinese universities in Cycle 2, to prove its cultural appropriateness, to investigate some remaining problems in its implementation and to further adjust its practices, as mapped in the figure below.

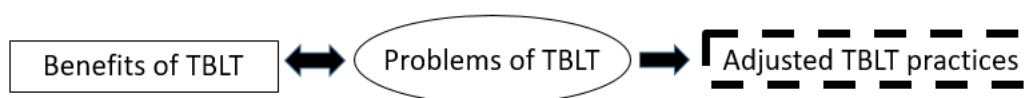


Figure 5.1 Organisation of the intervention

Findings in Cycle 2 helped answer the two research questions.

1. How does TBLT impact Chinese university students' English learning (i.e., shown by their perceptions, their English proficiency, their learning strategies)?
2. What are culturally appropriate TBLT practices in English classes of Chinese universities?
 - 2.1 What are the social and cultural factors in English classes of Chinese universities that influence the implementation of TBLT?
 - 2.2 How can TBLT practices be adjusted to better suit the sociocultural context of English classes in Chinese universities?

Specifically, the benefits of TBLT practices to develop the students' learning aspects answered the first research question by proving the impacts of TBLT. The problems facing the students' English learning answered the Research Question 2.1, by providing evidences for how the sociocultural context in China impeded Chinese students' development in the learning aspects. Finally, the further adjustments of TBLT practices developed at the end of Cycle 2, together with findings of Cycle 1, answered the Research Question 2.2.

5.1. The Adjusted TBLT to Teach Grammar

Grammar learning was the first learning aspect investigated in the current study. Based on Cycle 1 that reviewed literature about what TBLT practices could facilitate Chinese students' grammar learning, in Cycle 2, the researcher applied the framework initiated by Willis (1996) to design lessons utilising TBLT to teach grammar. Each lesson consisted of the main components illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to teach grammar (attributive clause) in Cycle 1

1. Grammatical input	
The students were provided with a short passage with several examples using attributive clause. The teacher instructed them to use attributive clause when describing features, advantages and categories of what they wrote about.	
Pre-task stage	
2. The students' focus on form during task performance	
The students were asked to brainstorm a list of expressions to describe a house. They were advised to focus on certain different aspects including the natural environment surrounding the house, the facilities and services nearby etc. and then further describe one specific aspect by discussing it.	
Task	1. Combination of focused and unfocused tasks

cycle stage	The students were asked to work in pairs on some specific topics like “Suppose you were a sales representative in a real estate agency, introduce one house to your potential customer”. They had to apply attributive clauses to describe the advantages of their house.
--------------------	---

2.The students’ self-directed learning of grammar

After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to role play the dialogues to the whole class.

3.All students had to listen to others’ dialogues, and then report the major attractiveness of the house by using attributive clause.

Language focus stage	1.The researcher then explained the rules of attributive clause: noun phrase + relative pronoun/relative adverb (that/wh-) + descriptive structures and how wh- words should be selected based on the relation between the noun phrase and the descriptive structures.
	2.Finally, the students were asked to revise their dialogues using attributive clause.

Specifically, the major four adjusted TBLT practices to teach grammar in Cycle 1 (shown in bold fonts in Table 5.1) were elaborated in details in the subsection 2.3.1.

5.1.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Teach Grammar

After the researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2, findings obtained from the students’ interview responses, guided journal records and sample work disclosed the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices to teach grammar.

5.1.1.1. The Students’ Acquisition of Grammar Knowledge

The students' sample work showed their acquisition of the target grammar knowledge instructed in Cycle 2. Below are some examples.

You can drive to the public garden where you can enjoy a beautiful scenery.

Nobody can resist the temptation that you can find nowhere.

You are right, I'm the one who definitely likes this.

The balcony is attractive, from where you can enjoy a bird's-eye view of the city below.

The students' correct application of attributive clauses in their task performance showed that the adjusted TBLT practices benefited their grammar learning.

Furthermore, the participants' interview responses also revealed the reasons for their successful acquisition of grammar knowledge in this cycle. Below are two exemplar excerpts.

This pre-task activity helped me have a clear picture about how to perform my task better. I understood the typical structure of attributive clause, and knew when I could use it. (Cui, interview)

Previously, except in our examinations, I had few chances to use attributive clauses. But today I acted as the sales representative, I used it frequently to introduce my house. I think it's a good way to practice grammar in this way. (Ma, interview)

Findings obtained from the two participants' interview responses showed two reasons why the adjusted TBLT promoted their grammar learning. Initially, Cui preferred the previous knowledge about attributive clause he was exposed to in the pre-task stage.

This assisted his authentic application of this grammatical structure in the following task cycle stage. This finding is compatible with the previous study (Li et al., 2016). The authors also found more effective grammar learning for the students who had some previous explicit knowledge.

Another finding was drawn from Ma's explanation. She attributed her acquisition of attributive clause to her frequent usage and authentic practice of it in tasks. She also found out that the tasks "gave her many chances to practise" the grammar structures. This proved the benefit of the adjusted tasks between focused and unfocused tasks. This finding in the current study aligns with the previous studies (Li et al, 2016; Long, 2015; Skehan, 1998) in that the tasks promoted the students' learning by providing a context for intensive use of grammatical knowledge.

5.1.1.2. The Students' Awareness of Focus on Form Rather Than on Forms

Apart from the students' successful acquisition of the grammar knowledge, their awareness of focus on form also highlighted the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practice in Cycle 2. Findings obtained from the students' interview responses and guided journal records revealed their enhanced awareness of focus on form. Below are some exemplar excerpts.

I think learning grammar is really important, because it is emphasised in our examinations. But what I learned today is that grammar also serves the expression of meanings. You cannot learn grammar just for grammar. (Zhao, guided journal)

My practice of the grammar knowledge to resolve the real life problems is interesting and useful. I feel quite confident about grammar learning now. (Sun, interview)

The participants' feedback disclosed their enhanced awareness of focus on form after Cycle 2. Specifically, Zhao recognised the function of grammar learning was to “serve the expression of meanings”. This revealed his combination of focus on language forms and language meanings. This accorded with the TBLT rationale of focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long, 2000). TBLT establishes the methodological rationale of focus on form as a middle path between the language forms and meanings. Therefore, Zhao's response proved the influence of TBLT on his awareness of grammar learning. In addition, Sun also figured out the meaning of grammar learning as “to resolve the real life problems” in the authentic language usage. This is also in line with the rationale of TBLT to enhance the students' language learning in communicative tasks (Ellis, 2009; Rodríguez-Bonces & Rodríguez-Bonces, 2010). In summary, the participants' responses after their task performance in Cycle 2 proved their enhanced awareness of focus on form emphasised in TBLT.

Furthermore, the t-test result also revealed that more students cultivated their awareness of focus on form rather than forms after Cycle 2. The table below shows the students' changes in their responses to the questionnaire item “What I pay more attention to when I speak English is how to express in grammatically correct way”.

Table 5.2 Differences in the students' perception towards grammar learning before and after Cycle 2

Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2	T	P
n=122	n=122		

M(SD)	M(SD)		
4.70 (0.71)	2. 81(0.64)	2.39	.04

The t-test result showed that most students changed their focus on language forms ($p < 0.05$). This evidenced the benefit of the adjusted TBLT practices to enhance students' balanced focus on language forms and meanings.

5.1.2. Problems of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Teach Grammar

At the end of Cycle 2, the researcher quickly analysed the data to inform further revision of TBLT practices. Findings reported three major problems in using TBLT to teach grammar. These issues are closely related to deeply rooted sociocultural aspects in the Chinese EFL context.

5.1.2.1. The Students' Failure in Acquiring Implicit Knowledge

In language learning, there are two types of learning gains including explicit and implicit knowledge (Christiansen & Chater, 2001). The latter refers to abstract and analysed knowledge, while the former refers to intuitive and procedural knowledge. To demonstrate implicit knowledge gains, learners need to be able to explain what it is. Differently, to show their explicit knowledge outcomes, learners only need to, for example, describe the rules to construct a sentence. In Cycle 1, some students gained explicit knowledge but almost no one

demonstrated implicit knowledge gains. For instance, the sentence composed by a student below evidenced their little understanding of grammar in Cycle 1.

You can go to the public library nearby because these books which the library collects is* interesting. (Zhao, sample work)

This sentence reported structural errors of attributive clauses. The student Zhao merely focused on the noun phrase “the library” and the relative pronoun “which”, meaning he got explicit knowledge of attributive clause. However, the error on subject-predicate consistency (these books is*) showed that Zhao was not consciously aware of the structure underlying the attributive clause. This was the implicit knowledge of this grammatical structure. To further explore the reasons for the students’ failure in acquiring the implicit knowledge, the researcher asked Zhao the interview question about why he made this mistake, and got the following response.

I’m still applying the learning method that I’m rather used to in our traditional classes. I mean, our teacher explains the grammar features and structures, then we practice. In this way, I don’t need to analyse why I make a sentence in this way or in that way. What I needed to do is just to memorise and to practise. (Zhao, interview)

Zhao’s response revealed that the problem can be primarily attributed to the traditional teaching which emphasises memorisation. Students in China are used to such teaching and learning procedures as: the teacher presents the grammatical rules, the students memorise the rules and then practise the structure in exercises. In this teaching framework, the students tend to focus on the surface grammar structure without obtaining a deep understanding of the

grammar structures. This finding of the current study thus contributes to the literature about the problems facing Chinese students in the traditional teaching. The previous research have already pointed out the dominance of the memorisation-based teaching in EFL classes in China (Hu, 2002; Tan, 2011), and the current study further examined the challenges this teaching method caused.

Furthermore, the students' failure in acquiring implicit knowledge also disclosed the disadvantage of focus on form regarding grammar teaching and learning. The TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 helped the students to establish the explicit representation of attributive clause, but failed to develop insufficient implicit knowledge. This finding is similar to the previous study (Li et al., 2016). The authors also announced the demand for "more extensive" grammatical instruction than focus on form treatment (Li et al., 2016, p. 223).

5.1.2.2. The Students' Dependency upon the Teacher's Presentation

The interview findings showed that almost all participants expressed their request for the teacher's more explanation. Below is an excerpt illustrating such a request.

I still need some explanation provided by our teacher when I'm doing the task. If our teacher can bring forward the feedback in the language focus stage into our task performance stage, I guess I would perform better. (Cui, interview)

Despite that the teacher could provide some feedback in the final language focus stage, the students' lopsided preference to the teacher's guidance during their task performance stage explicitly disclosed the gap that TBLT failed to facilitate the students to understand grammar instruction. The students failed to analyse and learn the grammar structure by themselves

mainly because they had been so familiar with the teacher-centred teaching tradition in China. This teaching tradition had made them become passive receivers of knowledge but not active in analysing what they heard and learned.

The finding of the current study thus also contributes to the literature about the problems caused by the traditional teaching in China. The result of the current study accords with the previous studies that suggest the mismatches between the teacher-centred teaching in China and the student-centred TBLT (Carless, 2004). The mismatches cause the students' negative attitudes toward TBLT. The current study thus provides evidence for this challenge facing Chinese students' English learning in TBLT.

5.1.2.3. The Students' Reluctance in Group Work

The majority of the participants (eight in ten) showed their reluctance in recognising the value of group/pair work when performing the tasks. Below are two exemplar excerpts.

I think it's a waste of time when we learn grammar together with our classmates.

Compared with this way, I prefer to reading textbooks explaining grammatical structures by myself. (Chen, interview)

Most of us cannot give each other beneficial help in learning English, especially in learning grammar. (Zhang, guided journal)

The students did not value group work and peer interactions because they had not been provided with opportunities to have constant interactions with the teacher and peers in their classes. Therefore, they preferred the textbook-based teaching and could not provide beneficial help to each other in their interactions, as illustrated in the above exemplar

excerpts. When they were asked to communicate with peers, and to work in groups, Chinese students can feel timid to share their ideas, or difficult to promote interaction.

The finding of the current study thus provided evidence for the literature regarding the textbook-centred teaching in China. The finding is in line with the previous studies (Carless, 2009; Rao, 2006) in that Chinese students, hold negative attitude towards the communicative tasks in TBLT, and they also do not have the sufficient abilities to promote their interaction in their task performance.

5.1.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Teach Grammar

Before TBLT practices were brought into Cycle 3, the researchers made some adjustments of the teaching and learning activities to ensure a better engagement of the students than in Cycle 2. To promote the students' development in implicit knowledge, to address their requirement for the teachers' feedback, and to enhance their efficiency in group work, the researcher combined the framework of TBLT and task-supported language teaching (TSLT) (Carless, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Li et al., 2016). Carless (2004) regards TSLT as “a weak version” of TBLT (p.659) that allows the students to communicate using language forms introduced by the teachers in traditional instruction. TSLT thus differs from TBLT in that it links the traditional PPP instruction which emphasises the teachers' instruction and TBLT which requires the students to learn in communicative tasks. In TSLT, the pedagogic tasks are still the main units of the classes, but the traditional teachers' instruction is also emphasised. Guided by the similarity and divergence between TBLT and TSLT, the researcher adjusted the TBLT practices in Cycle 2 by combining some rationales and practices of them together. Specifically, the students completed the tasks to communicate about grammar, this was under the framework of TBLT. In addition, the researcher added the students' corrective feedback

and the teacher's participation into TBLT. These two adjustments were guided by the framework of TSLT. The Table 5.2 below revealed how TBLT practices were adjusted in Cycle 2.

Table 5.3 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to teach grammar (non-predicate verbs) in Cycle 2

Training the students to provide corrective feedback

Pre-task

stage The students were trained to provide corrective feedback to each other by presenting and analysing some examples.

1. Task --- communicating about grammar

The students were asked to work in groups to compare and analyse sentences where non-predicate verbs were used in a correct and erroneous way.

Task

cycle

stage

2. The teacher's participation in the task

The teacher provided corrective feedback to the students during their group discussion.

3. After 30-minute discussion, some students were selected to present their analysis on the rules of non-predicate verbs to the whole class.

Language focus

The teacher explained the divergences between three types of non-predicate verbs including infinitive, gerund and [participle](#).

5.1.3.1. Communicating Grammar

To enable the students to obtain a better understanding of implicit knowledge, the researchers decided to apply the task-based grammar instruction. This approach is defined as “communicating about grammar” (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). The students were guided to discuss grammatical structures in all activities. Therefore, all target tasks were designed in a manner that aimed to help the students explain and understand grammar rather than only complete some real-life tasks. This design aimed to enable the students to learn grammar in meaningful conversations and discussion. Such a design is actually one of the core principles of TBLT (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Below is an example showing how tasks in Cycle 2 were designed.

Task: Compare the sentences and discuss with your partners to analyse the grammatical structures.

Correct: To help others will finally benefit yourself.

Correct: Helping others finally benefits yourself.

Incorrect: Help others will finally benefit yourself.

Incorrect: Helped by others will finally benefit yourself.

5.1.3.2. The Teacher's Participation in the Task

To reduce the students' heavy dependency upon the teacher's presentation and explanations, in Cycle 2, the researcher participated in the students' task performance as a facilitator and a partner. Ellis (2003) and Robinson (2011) claimed that to reduce the teacher's direct

instruction and increase learners' participation, the teacher should not guide students' performance but provide students with corrective feedback. This aims to provide an indication to the student that their use of the target structure is incorrect (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This principle aims to help the students have guidance to correct their work by themselves instead of being directly instructed by the teacher to correct their grammatical structures. This ensures students' active analysis of grammatical knowledge. The researchers applied these principles in Cycle 2 when designing activities. Below is an example showing how the researcher instructed a student to learn grammar.

Student: In these two correct sentences, “following” shows the teacher follows the student, while “followed” shows the opposite.

Teacher: “Followed” or “followed by”?

Student: Yes, “followed by”, the passive sentence should have a “by”.

Teacher: So the expression “followed by” is derived from what?

Students together: Passive sentence.

The dialogue disclosed how the researcher participated into the students' task performance. A clear difference between this adjusted TBLT practice and TSLT is thus evident. TSLT allows the teachers' explicit instruction of language forms, and then requires the students to use these forms in communicative tasks. This adjustment developed in Cycle 2, however, still insisted on the rationale of student-centred learning of TBLT, and rejected the teachers' direct and explicit instruction.

5.1.3.3. Training the Students to Provide Corrective Feedback

The students' reluctance to interact with their peers was another dilemma which needed to be resolved in Cycle 2. Lantolf (2000) exclaimed that interaction is a socially co-constructed process amongst learners. During their interaction, a more proficient learner can help the less proficient learner gain access to language skills. This kind of assistance can be finally internalised by their actual language output in their interaction, thus enabling them to eventually function independently. Lasito and Storch (2013) and Robinson (2011) claim that providing learners with communicative opportunities in interaction is also a benefit of TBLT. This is because these opportunities help learners fill the gap between their current language proficiency and the demanded language level to successfully complete the tasks via interactions. Besides, considering that some students perceived group work as a waste of time, before and during Cycle 2 the researcher provided the students with some training about how they could provide useful feedback to one other via concrete examples. The students were also encouraged to give inspiring feedback to motivate each other. Below are two examples that the researcher presented to the students.

Learner A: I notice you said, "The place is twelve kilometres away from the city, and 10,000 residents live there." I think you can say in another way, "The place is twelve kilometres away from the city where 10,000 residents live".

Learner B: Yes, you mean I can make an attributive clause here.

Learner A: Right, you can show the relevance between these two sentences.

Learner A: This sentence, "This part is located in the northwest of the town". It's not clear. You should say "to the northwest of the town", because it is out of this town.

Learner B: You are right. "In" means it's inside the town.

These two examples showed how some students provided peer feedback to their partners when they were performing tasks in Cycle 2. By presenting their own examples, the researcher aimed to motivate the students to engage more into their task interaction and develop their own grammar learning.

5.2. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy was another learning aspect investigated in the current study. Based on Cycle 1 that reviewed literature about what TBLT practices could develop Chinese students' learner autonomy, in Cycle 2, the researcher applied the following TBLT framework in each lesson.

Table 5.4 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' learner autonomy in Cycle 1

The students' automatic focus on meaning in pre-task planning	
Pre-task stage	The teacher guided the students to brainstorm a list of expressions to plan for a party. They were advised to focus on certain different aspects including the site where to hold the party, the food and service prepared for the party, and the activities in the party, etc. Then they were advised to further describe one specific focus by discussing it.
Task cycle stage	<p>1. More related task topics to the students' real life</p> <p>The students were asked to work in pairs on some specific topics like "Suppose you were the managers in one company, propose a plan for the staff new-year party".</p> <hr/> <p>2. After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to role play</p>

	the dialogues to the whole class.
	3. All students had to listen to others' dialogues, and then report the presented plans in their dialogues.
Language focus stage	1. The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and language usage.
	2. Finally, the students were asked to revise their dialogues by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their language usage.

Specifically, the two adjusted TBLT practices to develop the students' learner autonomy in Cycle 1 (shown in bold fonts in Table 5.4) were elaborated in details in the subsection 2.3.2.

5.2.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

After the researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2, findings obtained from the students' questionnaire responses, interview responses and guided journal records disclosed evident improvement in their learner autonomy.

5.2.1.1. Student-centred Teaching and Learning Style

The TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 emphasised the students' automatic focus on meaning in their pre-task planning, and also focused on the students' active engagement into the task cycle stage. These adjustments aimed to implement the student-centred teaching and learning style, which was contrary to the teacher-centred presentation in the traditional language teaching classroom in China. The TBLT practices thus advocated the student-centred teaching during all the three major stages of TBLT. The students were encouraged to focus on language meaning by their own preparation of linguistic resources in

the pre-task stage, to complete the tasks in their own group work in the task cycle stage, and then were guided to revise their own language use by correcting the errors and refining some linguistic structures in the language focus stage. During this learning process, the students focused on their own learning of English during their engagement into all the three stages of TBLT. This triggered the students to be more conscious of their own learning process, and motivated them to acquire the language knowledge with their enhanced learner autonomy. In the interview and guided journal responses, many participants identified an improvement in their learner autonomy. Most of the students preferred the student-centred TBLT practices to the traditional teacher-centred instruction. Below are two exemplar excerpts.

The most enticing success in my English learning today is that I can analyse my own errors and problems. This stimulates me to be self-independent, because I recognise that I can learn English by myself. (Yang, interview)

What we're quite used to is the teacher's explanation of the English knowledge, but the teacher cannot always notice all the students' challenges in the classroom. So I prefer this style of English teaching, for I can focus on my own errors, then the process of correcting them can be helpful to my English learning. (Sun, guided journal)

The participants' feedbacks that showed their enhanced learner autonomy in TBLT also supported findings in the previous research about Chinese students' learning styles. Specifically, Sun's journal response suggested that teacher-centred explanation dominated the language classes in China (Hua, et al., 2011), therefore most Chinese students showed their passive dependence upon their teachers and lacked both the experience and ability in autonomous learning (Cortazzi & Jin 1996; Heng, 2018; Zhao & Bourne, 2011). After learning in the student-centred TBLT in Cycle 2, however, the students cultivated their self-independence and developed their autonomous learning skills. This change revealed the positive influence of the adjusted TBLT on the students' learner autonomy.

In addition, the t-test results also evidenced the students' improvement in their learner autonomy. The table below shows the students' changes in their understanding of their own learning and perception to their teachers' instruction in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 when they responded to the item "I need the teacher's explanation of English knowledge, because I cannot fully understand them by myself." Data analysis showed that there was a significant difference in the students' perceptions after the two cycles ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of TBLT practices in Cycle 1 by enhancing the students' learner autonomy to focus on their own learning instead of their teachers' instruction.

Table 5.5 Differences in the students' perceptions towards the teachers' instruction before and after Cycle 2

Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2		
n=122	n=122	T	P
M(SD)	M(SD)		
4.63 (0.69)	2.67(0.65)	2.47	.03

The finding of the current study corresponds with the previous research in that the student-centred teaching could promote the students' development in learner autonomy (Palfreyman, 2003) and in that TBLT could promote the students' learner autonomy (Vieria, 2017).

5.2.1.2. Authentic Language Usage

The researcher adjusted the TBLT practices by designing the task topics to be more related to the students' real life. When the adjusted TBLT practices were implemented in Cycle 2, the students learned English by way of their own authentic language usage in one daily-life task. Therefore, they had the chance to practise English in their own preferred way, including their choices of certain words and expressions (e.g. comparison between the two words of “*traffic*” and “*transportation*” in “*traffic congestion*” and “*transportation mode*”), their repetition of certain pragmatic structures (e.g. “*I would like to suggest that* ” when expressing their ideas during discussion with another person), and some self-correction of their errors in language usage. During the authentic language usage to solve the daily-life problems, students were motivated to analyse and synthesise the linguistic rules by themselves, which stimulated their automatic language learning and developed their sense of achievement, thus enhancing their learner autonomy. In contrast to the traditional memorisation-based teaching in China, TBLT fostered the students' opportunities to learn automatically and analyse actively. Two of the participants expressed their preference for their authentic usage of English in TBLT in such a manner as illustrated in their feedback below:

Chances for us to use English are quite precious and beneficial. Compared with the traditional class where teacher teaches and students memorise, I prefer this more practical way of English learning, because it helps us better communicate with people from other countries and to solve more daily problems in our future life. (Li, interview)

In our traditional classes, what our teacher teaches is the second-hand knowledge which has been digested by our teacher, thus requiring little for our own analysis. So I prefer TBLT where I can use English by myself, and can analyse my own

errors and fulfil my own goals. I'm happy to dominate my own learning. (Wang, guided journal)

In detail, Li valued the authentic language usage in TBLT highly because it equipped her with the ability to communicate well and to solve real life problems. Wang recognised that the chance to dominate his own English learning in tasks could provide him with the first-hand knowledge. They both enhanced their learner autonomy in the process of authentic language usage during their task performance.

Besides, the t-test results also revealed the students' confidence in their self-learning in Cycle 1. Table 5.5 shows the students' changes in their perceptions towards their ways of language learning in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 when they responded to the item "I think memorising the language knowledge of the target language is the best way to learn it." The authentic language usage in TBLT provided Chinese learners the opportunities to learn English through their own practice and analysis, thus enhancing their learner autonomy. Data analysis showed a significant difference between the students' respective agreement and disagreement to this question before and after Cycle 2 ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 by changing the students' attitudes towards efficient approaches to English learning.

Table 5.6 Differences in the students' perceptions towards memorisation before and after Cycle 2

Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2		
		T	P
n=122	n=122		

M(SD)	M(SD)		
4.47 (0.66)	2. 71(0.63)	2.47	.03

The finding of the current study corresponds with the previous research in that the students' authentic language usage in TBLT could enhance their learner autonomy (Hua, et al., 2011; Viera, 2017). Furthermore, the current study also contributed to the literature of Chinese students' development in learner autonomy. Specifically, the finding figures out in the Chinese context where authentic English communication is limited, TBLT provides a supplement to the English learners to both practice their language usage and to enhance their learner autonomy.

5.2.2. Problems of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

Findings obtained from the participants' interview and guided journal responses also revealed two problems of TBLT in enhancing their learner autonomy.

5.2.2.1. The students' Over Emphasis on Learner Autonomy

Two participants' feedback revealed that they had developed learner autonomy during their task performance in Cycle 2, evidenced by their perception about the efficiency and benefit of self-learning, as shown in the following interview responses.

I'm so excited that I can analyse what I find out by myself, instead of receiving something from the textbook or the teacher. For example, when I first used the word "appropriate", my partner could not understand what I meant. I checked its pronunciation and finally corrected my pronunciation of it. To tell you the truth, I'm proud of myself now. (Zhao, interview)

I think I'm learning better after I figure out that I can learn by myself. Previously, it cost me quite a lot of time to repeat the exercises assigned by the teacher, some of which were not helpful to me because they were too easy to finish. But now I can follow my own pace to learn something valuable to me, it's quite interesting. (Ma, interview)

The two participants' interview responses showed their enhancement of their learner autonomy. Specifically, Zhao was a student with relatively lower proficiency level. The student-centred learning in TBLT helped him to establish self-confidence in learning English. On contrary, the highly proficient student Ma, preferred TBLT because she could follow her own pace in learning. The adjusted TBLT practices thus developed the students' learner autonomy by addressing their different learning paces and goals.

Unfortunately, one problem ensued in that learner autonomy was over emphasised by these two learners. Their responses to one journal question showed that their over emphasis on their autonomous learning actually led to less efficient effort in their task performance, thus impeding their English learning. The question is "What is the major difficulty when you complete the task?"

I figure out that some easier ways to express are actually the best ways for language usage. I always pursued the seemingly difficult structures to express my

ideas, because I wanted to learn more and practise more. In fact, my partners' easier way was easy to understand and sounded more "local". An example is, I made a sentence "Whoever avoiding to have spare time all day long can fully employ the facilities in the hotel." Then my partner expressed in another way, "People who want to be fully occupied all day long can take advantage of the facilities in the hotel." I intended to make a sentence with the non-predicative verb, but my partner's expression sounded better. (Ma, guided journal)

What confuses me a lot is that whenever I want to learn more and better, I indeed learned less and worse. I think I'm quite an autonomous learner, but without the teacher's instruction, I always tend to be over ambitious to learn more, which proves to be less efficient. (Zhao, guided journal)

These two Chinese learners show typical examples for "full learner autonomy" mentioned in a previous study (Wielenga-Meijer et al., 2011, p.307). The results obtained in the two participants' feedback correspond with previous researchers' findings in that learners' over emphasis on their learner autonomy will indeed frustrate them. The first reason is that higher levels of learner autonomy always motivate learners to make more practice trials to fulfil their learning goals. Ma's endeavour to practice more complicated sentences in English proved that her over emphasis on learner autonomy indeed frustrated her confidence in learning. Moreover, some learners' efforts can be inefficient behaviours to their English learning, nothing but their perceived approach to their learning goals far beyond their actual language proficiency levels. Zhao suffered from this confusion that his automatic learning indeed exerted negative impact on his English learning.

5.2.2.2. The Students' Failure in Pursuing Self-achievement in a Collectivist Culture

Findings gained from the data analysis also disclosed another problem facing Chinese students in their development of learner autonomy in TBLT practices, namely, the student's failure in pursuing self-achievement in the collectivist culture in China. China is a typical eastern country with a heritage Confucius culture, where collectivist culture requires people to emphasise the collectivist interest at the expense of one's individual achievement and personal needs (Hu, 2002). Learner autonomy which is highly valued in the western cultural context (Benson et al., 2003), contradicts the Chinese collectivist culture. The independence of the individual is not prioritised and autonomy is not seen as an ultimate goal of education in China. When asked the interview question "Do you feel the group-based task performance benefits your English learning?", the majority of the participants (seven in ten) felt this cultural obstruction in their language learning.

I think in the group-based task completion, what matters most is the collective success of our entire group, rather than every member's development. When our team successfully complete the task, our work is done. We don't need to further analyse the language knowledge occurring in our task performance. (Gao, interview)

My partner and I felt a little bit shy to express our ideas during our discussion. If we focus more on expressing our own ideas, especially those ideas contrary to my partner's, our team will not function as a whole. (Cui, interview)

The two participants' interview responses disclosed their insistence on the collectivist culture. This obstructed their learner autonomy in group work in the task-based classes from two perspectives. Initially, their belief in pursuing and maintaining the group's success deprived them of the opportunities to further explore their own language learning after their completion of the group work. Gao's interview answer proved this problem. Furthermore, the

collectivist culture impeded the students' freedom of self-expression and even dependent thinking. Although participating into the group-based tasks improved the students' cooperative learning abilities (e.g., Gilabert, Barón & Llanes, 2009; Maria & Ainara, 2016) and enhanced their language mastery (e.g., Kim, 2011; Kim & Taguchi, 2015; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Révész, 2011; Sasayama, 2016; Taguchi, 2007; Gilabert & Barón, 2013), in the Chinese context, the students could not benefit from the group-based task performance to develop their learner autonomy due to the rationales of collectivist culture in China. This complicated influence of the TBLT rational of group-based task performance requires the TBLT practitioners to hold a macroscopic perspective in their pedagogic innovation. This contribution of the current study will be discussed in the later part of the thesis.

5.2.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

After figuring out the problems facing Chinese students in their development of learner autonomy in Cycle 2, the researcher made some pedagogical interventions at the end of Cycle 2. The following table illustrated the procedures of the further adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 to enhance Chinese students' learner autonomy.

Table 5.7 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' learner autonomy in Cycle 2

Pre-task stage	1. The students' automatic focus on meaning in pre-task planning
	The students were asked to brainstorm the conditions for choosing the site for a supermarket to guarantee its commercial success. They were asked to focus on certain different aspects including the potential

customers it would attract, the transportation condition for its goods delivery, and establishment of its ancillary facilities. Then the students were asked to further describe one specific focus by discussing it.

2. Learner autonomy plus teacher instruction

The teacher guided the students to establish clear and concrete learning goals in the upcoming task performance.

3. Clear division of labour inside groups

the teacher asked the students to form groups with around 5 people in one group, and guided them to allocate clear division of labour to each group member.

1. More related task topics to the students' real life

The students were asked to work in groups on some specific topics like "Suppose you were the supermarket managers, select one suitable site from two for your supermarket". A map was shown in the class.

Task cycle stage

2. After 20-minute preparation, some groups were selected to present the main ideas in their discussion to the whole class.

3. All students had to listen to others' presentation, and

to report the presented plans in their dialogues.

1. The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and choices of words.

**Language focus
stage**

2. Finally, the students were asked to revise their dialogue by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their language usage.
-

5.2.3.1. Learner Autonomy plus Teacher Instruction

To reduce some learners' over emphasis on their learner autonomy, in Cycle 2, the researcher combined teacher instruction together with the students' enhancement of learner autonomy.

Before the students' task performance, in the pre-task stage, the researcher guided the students to establish clear and concrete learning goals for their upcoming task performance.

This process constituted the pre-task planning in Cycle 2. The students planned their learning goals in details, which could involve their application of some linguistic knowledge, like one grammatical structure or certain words, or their development in learning strategies, etc. Fully considering the students' individual learning styles and language proficiency, the researcher merely provided some potential learning goals for the students, but left the freedom to the students to make their own options and decisions. This enabled the learners to have the chance to develop their learner autonomy by generating their own plans. Simultaneously, to avoid the learners' over emphasis on their learner autonomy, two special tips were particularly proposed for their reference: "to set up your goals according to your own language

proficiency” and “to set up no more than two goals in one task.” In summary, both the learners’ self-guidance and the teacher’s instruction were integrated in this cycle.

5.2.3.2. Clear Division of Labour inside the Students’ Groups

Because findings obtained in Cycle 2 disclosed the influence of the Confucius collectivist culture on Chinese learners, how to enhance their learner autonomy in their group work was one focus in the pedagogical intervention in Cycle 2. Since Chinese learners give priority to their collective honour, working in the group and for the group can motivate most Chinese learners to try their utmost to perform the task. Furthermore, students will place greater value on learner autonomy if they recognise their contribution to the collectivist success by way of their own development. Therefore, at the end of Cycle 2, the researcher made one major adjustment in terms of the learners’ group organisation in their task performance. Specifically, the researcher required the students to assign different responsibilities to every group member. The fundamental group organisation consisted of one “team leader” who led and summarised the group work, one “recorder” who kept notes of the group discussion and refined their language outcome, one “language supporter” who solved other members’ linguistic problems by looking up words and expressions from the dictionary, one “ice-breaker” who controlled the pace of the team work by promoting the discussion when no one said anything, and one “wrap-up presenter” who presented the group’s discussion outcome in front of the whole class. All the five members were simultaneously “idea contributors” who proposed constructive suggestions and gave feedback to other members’ ideas to promote the group discussion. This adjustment aimed to enable every student to identify their position and contribution to their whole team, thus enhancing their learner autonomy during their team cooperation.

5.3. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' LLS

Based on literature review about what TBLT practices could develop Chinese students' LLS, the researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 1 in the actual English classes in Cycle 2. The following table illustrates the specific procedures of these task-based classes.

Table 5.8 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' LLS usage in Cycle 1

Pre-task stage	1. The teacher guided the students to brainstorm the conditions for writing an application for leave on campus. They were advised to imagine any conditions as they could.
	2. Training of affective strategies The teacher instructed the students to motivate themselves to be fully engaged by managing their own emotions.
	3. Training of metacognitive strategies The teacher guided the students to plan for their task performance, to organise the interaction structure and to establish their learning goals.
Task cycle stage	1. Training of compensatory strategies The teacher instructed the students to understand and promote conversation by using contextual information.
	2. Training of social strategies The teacher instructed the students to facilitate their interaction with others and to pay more attention to cultural background.
	3. The students were asked to work in pairs on some specific

	<p>conditions like to act as one teacher and his/her student. The student forged one application for leave explaining his/her absence from class the day before. The teacher debunked the lie of the student.</p>
	<p>4. After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to role play the dialogues to the whole class.</p>
	<p>1. The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and language usage.</p>
Language focus stage	<p>2. Training of cognitive strategies</p> <p>The teacher instructed the students to acquire English knowledge through cognitive procedures.</p>
	<p>3. Finally, the students were asked to revise their dialogue by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their language usage.</p>

5.3.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students' LLS

5.3.1.1. The students' more overall usage of all the six categories of LLS

The data analysis of LLS questionnaires (SILL) with all the 122 students indicated that there was a significant increase in their overall usage of all the six categories of strategies, as illustrated in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Mean values for usage frequency of all strategies before and after Cycle 2

	Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2
Overall mean reported frequency of use	3.0	3.5
Number of strategies used highly frequently	9	25
T		2.16
P		.02

Specifically, mean value reported the overall frequency of usage of all the 47 strategies at 3.0 before Cycle 2, which showed Chinese students' moderate usage of LLS, falling in the range described by Oxford (1990) between 2.5 to 3.4. This result is in line with some other previous studies (Nisbet et al., 2005; Rao, 2006). After implementing the strategy training in TBLT in Cycle 2, the participants' overall usage of LLS reported by the mean value increased to 3.5, falling in the range of high usage at 3.5-5.0 proposed by Oxford (1990). The finding of t-test also revealed that there was a significant difference between participants' LLS usage levels ($p < 0.05$). This showed the positive influence of the adjusted TBLT practices on Chinese students' LLS usage.

In addition, regarding every specific item in this questionnaire, most strategies showed an increase in the usage frequency (as shown in details in the following two subsections). This indicated that apart from the more frequent overall usage of all strategies, the participants in the current study also showed a development in their usage of every strategy. Remarkably, the highly frequently used strategies were only 9 items before the implementation of TBLT in Cycle 2, but this amount rose into 25 after Cycle 2, indicating the benefit of the strategy training in TBLT in Cycle 2.

5.3.1.2. *The Students' More Usage of the Direct LLS*

In terms of the detailed description about the students' usage of every strategy, the quantitative data also provided hard evidence for the students' development after Cycle 2. Because the previous studies in this field (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Rao, 2006; Yu & Wang, 2009) reported Chinese learners' preference to the direct strategies, the participants' usage of the direct strategies will be initially reported here.

Table 5.10 Differences in the students' usage frequency of direct strategies before and after Cycle 2

Item no.	Language learning strategies	Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2
		M(SD)	M(SD)
1	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things	3.1(0.76)	3.7 (0.82)
2	I use new words in a sentence	3.5 (0.72)	3.6 (0.75)
3	I create sounds or images to remember new words	2.9(0.81)	2.9(0.73)
4	I create mental pictures to remember new words	2.8(0.69)	2.7(0.71)

5	I use rhymes to remember new words	3.3(0.91)	3.3(0.78)
6	I use flashcards to remember new words	3.0(0.81)	4.0 (0.73)
7	I physically act out new words	3.0(0.69)	3.3(0.82)
8	I review English lessons often	3.5 (0.81)	3.8 (0.76)
9	I use location to remember new words	3.2(0.68)	4.2 (0.81)
10	I say or write new words several times	3.5 (0.91)	3.6 (0.84)
12	I practise the sounds of English	3.2(0.65)	4.0 (0.71)
13	I use words I know in different ways	3.6 (0.71)	4.1 (0.92)
14	I start conversations in English	3.2(0.85)	3.7 (0.79)
17	I write notes, messages, letters, reports	3.0(0.67)	3.6 (0.83)

18	I skim read then read carefully	3.2(0.81)	4.2 (0.79)
19	I look for similar words in my own language	3.5 (0.73)	4.2 (0.70)
20	I try to find patterns in English	3.3(0.72)	3.7 (0.85)
21	I divide words into parts I understand	3.5 (0.82)	4.3 (0.76)
22	I try not to translate word for word	2.7(0.76)	2.7(0.79)
23	I make summaries of information	3.5 (0.80)	4.2 (0.85)
24	I guess the meaning of unfamiliar words	3.1(0.70)	3.3(0.78)
25	When I can't think of a word during conversation, I use gestures	2.9(0.68)	2.9(0.87)
26	I make up words if I don't know the right ones	2.8(0.82)	3.4(0.79)
27	I read without looking up every new word	3.5 (0.69)	3.8 (0.73)

28	I guess what the other person will say next	2.8(0.74)	2.8(0.79)
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29	If I can't think of a word I use a synonym	3.3(0.76)	3.5(0.81)
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Number of strategies used highly frequently	8	17
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Findings obtained from the data analysis for the LLS questionnaires before and after Cycle 2 showed the general increase in the students' usage of the direct strategies. Specifically, in all the 30 strategies, they used 20 strategies with high frequency, falling in the range of 3.5-5.0 proposed by Oxford (1990). Among the 20 highly used strategies, 12 strategies were used at a moderate level before the strategy training in Cycle 2. This showed the positive influence of the strategy training in the adjusted TBLT.

The participants' feedback in their guided journals also explained the details about their increased usage of some direct strategies in Cycle 2. Below are some exemplar excerpts.

(In terms of item 10) What inspired me a lot today is that my repeated usage of new words can help me a lot to learn them. I tried to use my newly learnt words again and again, then I remembered them. (Zhao, guided journal)

(In terms of item 23) I acted as the teacher in our task today. I found the summary of information helpful in two ways. Firstly, summaries of my partner's explanations helped me debunk her lies. I found reasons why I refused her request for a leave according to her explanations. This was effective. Secondly, in the final stage of language learning, I also used my summary to synthesise language knowledge. This helped me learn more quickly. (Gao, guided journal)

(In terms of item 27) In my task performance today, I learned some new words from my partner. In the past, I would look up these new words in dictionaries. But today, I tried to guess the meanings of what my partner might express in our dialogue. I found it quite useful, and most time I was right. I feel more confident.

(Sun, guided journal)

(In terms of item 33) What makes me feel proud today is the way I manage my learning. It's not only about English learning. I learn how to learn from my classmates who are not better than me in English, and how to relate what I've already understood and what I'm just learning. They are helpful to my future learning in every subject. (Ma, guided journal)

The participants' guided journal responses disclosed their development in the direct strategies. The usage of the cognitive strategies of Zhao and Gao heled them both in their task performance and their English learning. The usage of compensatory strategies by Sun and Ma helped them become confident and well-organised learners. All the qualitative data proved the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practice in Cycle 2.

5.3.1.3. The Students' More Usage of the Indirect LLS

Furthermore, TBLT trained the students different categories of strategies in different stages in Cycle 2. Chinese students thus had the chances to practise some strategies not familiar to them or not preferred by them before. As shown in the literature review, previous studies (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Rao, 2006; Yu & Wang, 2009) indicate that Chinese learners prefer to apply direct strategies in their English learning, whereas rarely use indirect ones, especially affective and social strategies. In the current study, however, after the separated and detailed training of all the strategies in TBLT, Chinese students had chances to acquire and practise the indirect strategies. As shown in Table 5.11, therefore, some metacognitive strategies (item 30, 32, 33, 34 and 35), affective strategies (item 41) and social strategies (item 46 and 49)

were highly frequently used by the participants after Cycle 2. This proved the benefit of the adjusted TBLT practice in this cycle.

Table 5.11 Differences in the students' usage frequency of indirect strategies before and after Cycle 2

Item no.	Language learning strategy	Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2
		M(SD)	M(SD)
30	I try to find many ways to use English	3.0(0.74)	3.9 (0.82)
31	I use my mistakes to help me do better	2.6(0.68)	2.8(0.74)
32	I pay attention to someone speaking English	3.3(0.75)	4.2 (0.81)
33	I try to find how to be a better learner	3.2(0.70)	3.6 (0.74)
34	I plan my schedule to have enough time to study	3.1(0.74)	3.8 (0.78)
35	I look for people I can talk to in English	3.5(0.82)	4.2 (0.90)

36	I look for opportunities to read in English	3.0(0.66)	3.4(0.72)
37	I have clear goals for improving my English	2.7(0.71)	3.3(0.78)
38	I think about my progress	2.5(0.78)	3.4(0.81)
39	I try to relax when afraid of using English	2.8(0.71)	2.8(0.78)
40	I encourage myself to speak even when afraid	2.6(0.79)	3.2(0.74)
41	I give myself a reward when I do well	3.1(0.82)	3.6(0.91)
42	I notice if I am tense or nervous	2.8(0.70)	2.9(0.87)
43	I write my feelings in a diary	2.7(0.75)	3.2(0.69)
44	I talk to someone else about how I feel	2.5(0.68)	3.1(0.82)
45	I ask others to speak slowly or repeat when I don't understand	2.8(0.79)	2.8(0.80)

46	I ask my partner(s) to correct me when I talk	2.8(0.75)	3.7(0.79)
47	I practise English with other students	2.6(0.67)	3.3(0.81)
48	I ask for help from my partner(s)	2.4(0.79)	3.3(0.90)
49	I ask questions in English	2.7(0.86)	3.5(0.69)
50	I try to learn the culture of English speakers	2.6(0.84)	3.2(0.74)

Number of strategies used highly frequently

1

8

Besides, the qualitative data also revealed the students' more frequent usage of the indirect LLS, especially in terms of their increased confidence in using some strategies they were previously unfamiliar with. Below are some exemplar excerpts.

Our teacher guided us how to use some social strategies in our communication. Because we are not often exposed to the chances of communication in English, we were quite unskilful to use these strategies. So my partner and I encouraged each other and wrote down the good language points used by each other. The sense of achievement gained in this process largely motivated us to further use the strategies. It's a virtuous circle. (Sun, guided journal)

Before the task actually started, our teacher guided us to make a plan for our task performance. I once thought it would be useless, compared with preparation for vocabularies and grammar knowledge. But I finally figured out that this plan helped us a lot. We just followed the plan, and did step by step. I (acting as the student) forged an excuse, he (as the teacher) refused my application for leave. I then explained the reasons in details, he debunked my lie by presenting the reasons. I defended for my excuse once again, and he finally announced a punishment to me. It was clear to do the task with a plan in mind. (Ma, interview)

The participants' description details provided evidence about how Sun and her partner applied the affective strategies to manage their learning and how Ma and her partner applied metacognitive strategies to plan their turns of interaction in their task performance. These examples of LLS usage highlighted the benefits of adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 in that the strategy training, initially, raised Chinese learners' awareness of LLS usage, cultivated their confidence and motivation of LLS, and simultaneously, trained them about the specific procedures of LLS in details.

The quantitative data revealed that the overall usage by participants for some social strategies was significantly high. Among these strategies, some were necessary used in the communicative tasks, like item 47, "I practise English with other students" and item 49 "I ask questions in English". The higher frequency for these strategies were naturally attributed to the nature of TBLT, which demanded participants' engagement into the interaction with each other during their task performance. The employment of other social strategies, however, could not be explained by the design features of TBLT itself, such as item 46 "I ask my partner(s) to correct me when I talk" and item 48 "I ask for help from my partner(s)". Specifically, all the ten focused participants chose 5 "Strongly Agree" and 4 "Agree" when

responding to these two questionnaire items, showing an extremely high frequency of usage. Noticing the frequent usage of these social strategies, in the interviews, the researcher asked the focused participants about the reasons, and their responses also indicated the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices in this cycle.

(In terms of item 46) I used to be really shy to speak English, especially in groups, because I'll be embarrassed with mistakes in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary choice. But in the tasks, I found it quite useful for my partner and me to correct each other's errors. Because as a team, what we achieve will be the honour for both of us. Besides, what my partner pointed out was really useful, for I could notice what I ignored before, I appreciate her assistance. (Gao, interview)

(In terms of item 48) I think my partner contributed much to our task performance. Sometimes when I didn't know how to express my ideas, such as how to say "the stove caught fire". She told me I could say "went up". (Their forged excuse note was "The stove caught fire, and the wallpaper went up. The fire department kept us out of our apartment all night." The author's explanation.) In reality, before the teacher's training of these strategies, I had no idea about how to ask for others' help. After the training about making a request by saying "What else could I say?" "Does it make sense to you?" or "Could you please paraphrase it for me in another way?", it's quite convenient for me to ask for help in my task performance. (Li, interview)

Findings obtained from the above qualitative data disclosed the reasons why the students' used the social strategies more frequently in Cycle 2. Initially, the strategy training in the adjusted TBLT practice trained them how to promote their interaction by putting forward some requests in their communication. This also enhanced their awareness of the significance

of mutual feedback between the students in their task performance. Furthermore, the collectivist culture in China, also contributed to the students' passion in using some social strategies in their interaction. This once again indicated the influence of sociocultural factors in Chinese context on Chinese learners' task performance in TBLT as well as their development of LLS.

5.3.2. Problems of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students' LLS

Participants' interview and guided journal responses also revealed some problems in their LLS usage after Cycle 2. These problems showed their less usage of certain strategies. It was naturally understandable and predictable that the comparison between usage frequencies of different categories would lead to some less frequently used strategies compared with others. After all, the students could not use all the strategies at the same frequency level, and it was not indeed necessary for them to apply all the listed strategies proposed by the researchers. The limited usage of certain strategies compared with others, therefore, was not actually a problem in their development of learning. The problems presented here, however, were associated with some strategies of the same features after further exploration. The less frequent usage of these strategies, therefore, could be analysed through the reasons why these features constrained Chinese students' usage of these strategies.

5.3.2.1. The Students' Limited Usage of Direct Strategies Associated with Extraverted Learning

The first problem was Chinese students' limited usage of some direct strategies. From Table 5.10 and 5.11, it was evident that most Chinese students in the current study preferred to use

direct strategies to facilitate their English learning in TBLT. Furthermore, by comparing the mean value reporting the students' usage of LLS before and after Cycle 2, a clear increase could be observed in terms of most direct strategies. Five direct strategies listed in the SILL questionnaire, however, showed a distinct tendency. Specifically, they were item 3 "I create sounds or images to remember new words", item 4 "I remember a new English word by making mental pictures of a situation in which the word might be used", item 22 "I try not to translate word for word", item 25 "When I can't think of a word during conversation, I use gestures" and item 28 "I guess what the other person will say next". The students' application of these five strategies did not increase after Cycle 2, but stabilised at the same quantity as before Cycle 2. Three participants' explanations in their interviews and guided journals showed their difficulties in employing these strategies.

Unique methods to learn words, like to create sounds, images (item 3), or mental pictures (item 4), are not suitable for me. I guess they are quite proper for younger learners, but as adults, we can mainly learn English by some more formal and serious methods. (Chen, guided journal)

I think translating between Chinese and English (item 22) is a good way either to express our ideas, or to understand others. After all, we are quite familiar with translation as our English classes are often organised this way. (Cui, interview)

After strategy training, I indeed gained some useful methods to resolve problems in my communication. But I failed to use gestures to supplement my verbal expressions (item 25) and to understand my partner by guessing his following expressions (item 28). These methods were not common when we communicate in our mother tongue, so my response to these two items were quite low. (Li, guided journal)

These explanations were rather typical of Chinese students, which emerged in the responses given by almost all the ten focused participants. Chen's responses showed his perception about learning as a serious business. He viewed the actions taken in the learning process as not suitable for university students. Cui explained his limited usage of strategy in item 22 due to the traditional grammar-translation teaching in China, and he did not bother to take the risk of abandoning his habit of translation. In the same vein, Li also showed her insistence to the habit of interaction in her mother tongue and her less preference to actions in learning.

Contrary to the participants' perceptions and beliefs, the five strategies were evidently included into extraverted learning (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Learners who prefer extraverted learning are action-oriented, risk-taking and interaction-inclined. Specifically, in extraverted learning, learners prefer to take actions and practise language in concrete experiences, to take risks despite the possibility of errors, and to participate into social interaction with others to improve their language proficiency (Myers & McCaulley, 1985; Li & Qin, 2006).

In the Chinese context, however, these three features of extraverted learning were in tension with Chinese students' sociocultural background. Initially, the Chinese assumption about learning is that it is a serious and laboured process (Hu, 2002). Therefore, learning a language relies heavily on the digestion and accumulation of knowledge. Learning language in actions in extraverted learning, like connect words with sounds and images and to create mental pictures, are thus not encouraged or even not accepted in traditional teaching in China. This explains why strategies in item 3 "I create sounds or images to remember new words" and in item 4 "I remember a new English word by making mental pictures of a situation in which the word might be used" were less used by Chinese participants in Cycle 2. Furthermore, deeply immersed in the traditional grammar-translation teaching in China, participants in the

study do not like to take risks to abandon the learning method to translate between Chinese and English in their communication in English. Thus, most participants also did not prefer the strategy in item 22 “I try not to translate word for word” in this study. Moreover, the skilful and natural usage of their mother tongue also hinders the students to take advantage of the compensatory strategies in interaction in a foreign language. So the participants in the current study stuck to their interaction style in their mother tongue, without gestures and guessing of other interlocutors’ meanings, whereas did not apply the strategies in item 25 “When I can’t think of a word during conversation, I use gestures” and 28 “I guess what the other person will say next” when interaction in English. Therefore, Chinese students were found to persist with their strategy usage such as they would in their interaction in their mother tongue, impeding their application and development of LLS in their English learning.

Findings of the current study showed that Chinese students used some direct strategies related to extraverted learning at a limited level. This is in line with the previous studies in three aspects. Initially, this result is aligned with the previous studies (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Li & Qin, 2006) that suggest the students’ LLS usage could be affected by their learning styles. Specifically, the students of a particular learning style always deploy the strategies that “exactly fall into their own types” (Li & Qin, 2006, p.79). Therefore, when the students find out that certain strategies are not compatible with their own learning styles, they would reject to adopt these strategies, thus preventing their development of these strategies. The result in the current study confirmed this claim in that the introverted learning style of most Chinese students prevented their usage of some LLS related to the extraverted learning style.

Furthermore, the current study also provided evidence for the theory of language transfer (Göbel & Vieluf, 2018; Odlin, 1989). This theory claims that in the process of second language acquisition, learners tend to apply the knowledge and skills from one language to

another language, namely, their mother tongue and the target language. This explains why Chinese students' mother tongue influenced their communicative skills in their English learning in the current study. The participants' persistence to the interaction style in Chinese impeded their development of some compensatory strategies.

In addition, the current study also provided the sociocultural account for Chinese students' introverted learning style. Specifically, the Chinese assumption of learning demotivated the participants to engage into the extroverted learning style, and the long rooted grammar-translation teaching in the English classes in China also influenced the participants' selection of some strategies. These findings in the current study thus indicated the influence of sociocultural factors on the students' LLS usage and development.

5.3.2.2. The Students' Limited Usage of Indirect Strategies Dealing with the Negative Conditions

Another problem regarding the students' development of LLS in Cycle 2 was their limited usage of some indirect strategies. Identical to direct strategies, indirect strategies also displayed an increase in the use frequency in Cycle 2. However, among all the indirect strategies, four indirect strategies listed in the SILL questionnaire were still relatively less frequently applied. Specifically, they were item 31 "I use my mistakes to help me do better", item 39 "I try to relax when afraid of using English", item 42 "I notice if I am tense or nervous", and item 45 "I ask others to speak slowly or repeat when I don't understand". The students' application for these four strategies did generally increase after Cycle 2, but compared with other indirect strategies, they were still less used. As shown in Table 5.10 and 5.11, the frequency of usage for these four strategies were all below 3.0, lower than the frequency of other indirect strategies.

These four strategies, in comparison with other indirect strategies, could be analysed as dealing with the context of negative conditions. There can be some positive conditions and negative ones in the process of language learning. The positive conditions involve the students' progress, development and achievement, whereas the negative conditions include the students' frustration, difficulties and challenges. Some strategies, such as those presented in item 38 "I think about my progress", and item 41 "I give myself a reward when I do well", help the students to deal with the positive conditions. As mentioned in the guided journal response by one participant (Sun, in the section of 5.3.1.3.), the students would be motivated by their "sense of achievement and confidence" cultivated in their application of certain strategies to deal with the positive conditions. Therefore, the students applied these strategies at a high level. By contrast, in the context of negative conditions, such as when the learners were afraid, nervous, erroneous or unable to understand, the students applied the related strategies less frequently. Two participants' explanation in interviews and guided journals showed their difficulties in deploying these strategies to deal with these conditions.

Suffering from some negative attitudes, like being afraid or nervous to speak English, what I desired to do at once was to resort to my already acquired knowledge to conquer these challenges. It's a waste of time to apply these strategies, because I still need to face the difficulties. (Yang, guided journal)

Learning is indeed a painstaking process, during which less pleasures can occur. So, I don't care much about the negative attitudes which will disappear as long as I try my best to learn. Applying strategies to deal with negative attitudes is just an expedient even a temporary escape. (Chen, interview)

The two participants' responses explained why they used the indirect strategies to deal with negative conditions less frequently. Yang's explanation showed her reluctance to apply some

affective strategies to deal with her negative attitudes during English learning. When confronted with some challenges in her English learning, she tended to apply the language knowledge to directly resolve the problems, rather than to apply the affective strategies to deal with the negative conditions. This tendency was typical among the participants in the current study, which was evident in the responses of six participants. Although the researcher had trained the students to apply indirect strategies to facilitate their English learning in Cycle 2, most participants still preferred the direct strategies. Even in the negative conditions where they could apply indirect strategies to deal with the challenges, they still resorted to the direct strategies. This finding of the current study is compatible with the previous studies in that Chinese students applied direct strategies more than the indirect ones (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Rao, 2006; Yu & Wang, 2009).

Furthermore, Chen's response provided another reason for the Chinese student's limited usage of the indirect strategies to deal with the negative conditions. The Chinese learning culture influenced the students' LLS usage. Viewing learning as "painstaking", Chinese learners were inclined to resort to the direct strategies when confronted with some negative conditions in their language learning. This finding of the current study is in line with the previous studies regarding the Chinese assumption about learning (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996). Regarding learning as a serious and laborious process, Chinese students ignore the effective management of their learning in the negative conditions, and emphasise the knowledge accumulation and mastery in their learning.

5.3.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' LLS

To resolve the problems in Chinese learners' LLS usage in Cycle 2, namely their limited use of strategies with features contrary to their learning styles and cultural beliefs, at the end of

Cycle 2, one pedagogical innovation was designed to adjust the TBLT practices. Specifically, the researcher required the students to write reflective journals about their own LLS usage after their task performance. Furthermore, strategy training embedded in TBLT at the end of Cycle 2 also showed some revision. The following table illustrated the procedures of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 to enhance learners' LLS usage.

Table 5.12 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' LLS in Cycle 2

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The students were asked to brainstorm the conditions for a frightening event. They were advised to imagine any conditions as they could, an accident, a natural disaster, an experience to watch a horror movie, could all be possible for them to describe.
Pre-task stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Training of affective strategies The teacher instructed the students to motivate themselves to be fully engaged by managing their own emotions.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Training of metacognitive strategies The teacher guided the students to plan for their task performance, to organise the interaction structure and to establish their learning goals.
Task cycle stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training of compensatory strategies The teacher instructed the students to understand and promote conversation by using contextual information.

2. **Training of social strategies**

The teacher instructed the students to facilitate their interaction with others and to pay more attention to cultural background.

3. The students were asked to work in pairs on some specific conditions like to act as one journalist and one interviewee. The journalist asked questions to guide the interviewee's description about one horrified event he/she had recently experienced. The interviewee gave details to describe the event.
-

4. After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to role play the dialogues to the whole class.
-

1. The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and language usage.
-

Language focus stage

2. **Training of cognitive strategies**

Instruct students to acquire English knowledge through cognitive procedures.

3. The students were asked to revise their dialogue by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their
-

language usage.

4. The students' reflective journal about LLS usage

Finally, the students were asked to write reflective journals about their own LLS usage

5.3.3.1. Strategy Training in TBLT

Similar to Cycle 1, the researcher also embedded strategy training in the adjusted TBLT practices. To resolve the problems of students' limited usage of certain strategies not compatible with their introverted learning, and other strategies to deal with their negative conditions in English learning, the strategy training developed at the end of Cycle 2 aimed mainly to cultivate the students' awareness of these limited applied strategies.

For instance, in order to develop the students' strategy reported in item 22 "I try not to translate word for word", the researcher presented the methods of meaning negotiation to the students. The teacher provided the students with some detailed examples about how to paraphrase sentences with other English expressions, to negotiate communicative meanings by putting forward some clarification requests or confirmation checks. This aimed to encourage the students to cultivate the cognitive habit of interacting and simultaneously thinking in English, and to avoid their dependency on their translation between the target language and their mother tongue. Furthermore, the researcher also trained the students to simultaneously apply different strategies together to supplement one another. Take item 22 as an example again. Strategies in item 1 "I think of relationships between what I already know and new things", item 13 "I use words I know in different ways" as well as item 49 "I ask

questions in English”, could all supplement the students’ application of the strategy to avoid translation between English and Chinese. The correlation between different strategies thus could help the students better understand and practice the application of each one strategy.

5.3.3.2. Students’ Reflective Journal about LLS Usage

Moreover, the researcher also developed one pedagogical intervention at the end of Cycle 2, namely, the students’ reflective journals. At the end of the language focus stage, the researcher required the students to summarise their application of LLS during their task performance. The researcher required the students to cover the following two major aspects in their reflections. Firstly, they should describe the strategies they applied to resolve what problems in their task performance. Taking the less applied strategies in Cycle 2 into consideration, the students were required to give priority to these strategies whenever they were confronted with the condition where these strategies could be applied. Besides, the students should also discover the association between different strategies during their application of them. Because the researcher had provided the students with examples of the correlation between strategies in the strategy training, the students were motivated to expand their usage of LLS by combining different strategies together to resolve the complicated conditions in their task performance.

5.4. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students’ WTC

The students’ raised WTC also evidenced their development in language learning in TBLT. After implementing the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 in this cycle, as guided in the framework shown in Table 5.13, the researcher analysed the data to explore the benefits of TBLT to develop the students’ WTC. Then the researcher further investigated the

problems facing Chinese students in their development of WTC in TBLT. Finally, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices to resolve these problems at the end of Cycle 2.

Table 5.13 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' WTC in Cycle 1

Pre-task stage	1. The students' choice of the task topic The teacher provided the students with several tasks with different topics, and allowed them to choose one task to complete in their following task performance.
	2. The students' self-preparation The teacher guided the students to brainstorm the benefits of having a trip by themselves.
Task cycle stage	1. One-way task plus two-way task The students were instructed to complete some specific tasks in pairs in three stages. For example, initially, one student reported his/her ideas, and the other student took note. Secondly, the two students played the reverse roles, as the reporter and the note-taker. The first two steps were both one-way tasks. Thirdly, the two students discussed together to complete the two-way task.
	2. After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to give a speech in front of the classroom to the whole class.
Language focus stage	1. The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and language usage.
	2. Finally, the students were asked to revise their monologues and

dialogues by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their language usage.

5.4.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students' WTC

After implementing the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 1 in the actual English classes in Cycle 2, the students' responses to the WTC questionnaires, interview responses, and guided journal records, all disclosed evident improvement of their WTC.

The quantitative data collected from the WTC questionnaires confirmed the positive effect of the adjusted TBLT practices in this cycle on students' WTC. Specifically, the t-test results found the students' increase in their WTC. Findings revealed that there was a significant difference between participants' WTC before and after Cycle 2 ($t=2.31$, $p<0.05$). Before the adjusted TBLT practices were implemented in Cycle 2, the mean value for participants' WTC was 3.32, whereas it increased to 4.57 after cycle 2.

Table 5.14 Differences in the students' WTC before and after Cycle 2

Before Cycle 2	After Cycle 2		
n=122	n=122	T	P
M(SD)	M(SD)		

3.32 (0.69)

4. 57(0.61)

2.31

.03

Furthermore, the qualitative data also revealed the students' increased willingness in their English communication. The participants' responses showed that the original rationales of TBLT and the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1, both contributed to their enhancement of WTC. The following parts, therefore, will show these qualitative data in two sections to distinguish the reasons that explained the students' development.

5.4.1.1. The Students' Development in WTC due to the Rationales of TBLT

Some participants' interview responses and descriptions in guided journals showed their enhancement in WTC in Cycle 2.

To my great surprise, I found myself a rather active English user today. The tasks provided us the chance to speak English in a rather real-life condition, I cherish this chance which is hard to look for in our daily life. (Wang, interview)

Unlike in the traditional classes where I have to follow our teacher's instruction, I can now keep pace with my own English ability. More engaged I am into the communication, more problems I can discover in my English expression. (Zhao, guided journal)

When my partner and I gave a speech in front of our classmates, I felt proud and confident. I found our joint efforts finally paid off, our active communication offered us the chance to show off after our endeavour and concentration. (Li, interview)

We are allowed to learn and use English in a really relaxed atmosphere. We can enjoy learning in our interaction with each other. It's interesting. (Zhang, guided journal)

The participants' description provided evidence about how they gradually became more willing to communicate in their task performance. Specifically, Wang became an "active English user", Zhao engaged more into the English communication to "discover more problems", Li felt "proud and confident" to give a speech to the whole class, and Zhang "enjoyed" his interaction in English. Their increased WTC disclosed the benefits of adjusted TBLT practices.

Moreover, the participants' responses also explained the reasons why TBLT could enhance Chinese students' WTC. Specifically, as described by Wang, TBLT provided the students with the chances to communicate in English as in the "real-life condition", thus enhancing the students' "active" engagement. This finding is in line with the previous study (Grant, 2018) in that TBLT can develop the students' WTC because it provides them with communicative opportunities. Furthermore, Zhao explained the benefits of TBLT as allowing him to discover his "own learning problems", thus he could learn more by communicating more in the tasks. This finding proved the benefits of the student-centred TBLT (Vieira, 2017) to allow the students to learn at their own pace. These two findings showed that TBLT could be theoretically beneficial to enhance the students' WTC, because its rationales of being communication-based and student-centred provided the students with more opportunities to communicate.

Furthermore, the participants' explanation also showed the practical benefits of TBLT to enhance the students' WTC. Specifically, Zhang claimed that the "relaxed atmosphere" in the

pedagogic tasks allowed him to enjoy the communication in English. Finding obtained from this participant's response is compatible with the previous studies (Eddy-U, 2015; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Zarrinabadi et al., 2014) in that positive classroom atmosphere could enhance the students' WTC.

In summary, the rationales of TBLT can benefit the students' enhancement in WTC from both the theoretical and practical perspectives. The theoretical benefit referred to that the communication-based rationale of TBLT required the students to communicate in the pedagogic tasks, thus increased their WTC during their task performance. The practical benefit referred to that the student-centred rationale of TBLT offered the students the opportunities to learn more and created the positive atmosphere, thus promoted the students' enhancement of WTC.

5.4.1.2. The Students' Development in WTC due to the Adjusted TBLT Practices

Furthermore, in addition to the benefits of the original TBLT rationales, findings obtained from the current study also revealed the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 to develop the students' WTC.

I appreciate the chances for us to choose our own task topic today. I really find the topics in our textbooks tedious and boring, we don't really care politics, history and scientific development. I like travelling, so I have so many ideas to express about our topic today. (Li, interview)

After our own preparation, I have my own plans about what to say in the following task. I don't feel anxious any more when I'm speaking English, for I've already prepare enough words and phrases to express my ideas. (Sun, guided journal)

In our task today, I was the reporter in the first step. I had to keep on speaking, no one else could do it instead of me. (Zhao, interview)

In our final step in the task today, I really enjoy our joint effort to complete our speech. We assist each other to do the task, I can learn more in such a friendly environment. (Chen, guided journal)

Participants' responses to the interview questions and guided journal questions also found how the adjusted TBLT practices positively affected their WTC. Specifically, the students' own choice of the task topics inspired Li's willingness to express, the students' self-preparation for their task performance reduced Sun's anxiety during her communication, the combination of one-way tasks and two-way tasks both encouraged Zhao to be responsible for the communication and allowed Chen to learn more in his collaborative learning with his partner. The adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 enhanced Chinese students' WTC in this cycle. These results are in line with the previous studies on the variables influencing the students' WTC in that more interesting and familiar topics (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 2011; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Zarrinabadi, 2014), less anxiety through preparation for the communication (Kang, 2005; Peng, 2012; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018), more motivation and sense of responsibility (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), as well as more friendly and assistant interlocutors (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018), could all facilitate the students' WTC in their language learning.

Furthermore, two participants' interview responses also highlighted the benefit of applying the influential factors of TBLT to adjust its implementation.

Compared with the teacher's guidance before our task performance, I prefer our own preparation. We can plan according to our own levels, and make process little by little. (Gao, interview)

Before our tasks, my partner and I prepared for our task performance together. When we discussed together, we can contribute to each other by talking about something we could not reach by oneself. (Yang, interview)

The two students' feedback proved the benefits of the pair-based self-preparation. Gao preferred this adjustment to the pre-task planning guided by the teachers, and Yang compared this with the individual planning. These findings of the current study are in line with the previous research comparing the different participatory structures in pre-task planning (Foster & Skehan, 1999; Xu & Ferguson, 2013). They found that pair-work planning motivated more collaborative and animated discussion among the students.

Moreover, the finding obtained from one participant's feedback also revealed how the adjusted TBLT integrated with the Chinese sociocultural context to collaboratively influenced the students' enhancement in WTC.

We have to fulfil the task together, it's not just my own business, it's also related to my partner. I must maintain our team honour. If anyone is passive, unwilling to take part in, our team would be affected. No one wants a result like that. We must concentrate for our team. (Cui, interview)

Cui's description provided evidence about how he gradually became more willing to communicate in his task performance. Specifically, Cui "concentrated" on the team

discussion and became more willing to communicate in the tasks. His increased WTC disclosed the benefits of adjusted TBLT practices.

Cui's feedback also disclosed the influence of the collectivist culture on his development in WTC. When the researcher designed the pair-based tasks in Cycle 2, the Chinese collectivist culture motivated the students to engage more into the communication to pursue the "team honour". This explained why Cui developed his WTC in TBLT. This finding once again highlighted the influence of sociocultural factor on the students' task performance in TBLT.

Therefore, the participants' feedback after their task performance in Cycle 2 disclosed how the adjusted TBLT practices and the Chinese sociocultural context simultaneously influenced their development in WTC. Specifically, the group-based tasks in TBLT required the students to complete tasks with collaborative efforts, and the Chinese collectivist culture required the students to emphasise the team spirit. The TBLT practices and the Chinese sociocultural factor thus formed a positive interplay because the TBLT practices suited Chinese students' cultural demand. Therefore, the group-based tasks helped motivate the students' communication and enhance their WTC. This explains why researchers (Carless, 2004; Pham, 2011) pursued for the culturally appropriate pedagogies in the specific sociocultural context: only when the pedagogic approaches suit the sociocultural context, can these approaches exert positive influences on students' learning.

5.4.2. Problem of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 1 to Develop the Students'

WTC: The Students' Lopsided Emphasis on Language Forms

Although the data revealed that the students were more willing to communicate in English after the implementation of adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2, the participants' interview responses, guided journal responses and audiotaped task performance also revealed one challenge: their lopsided emphasis on language forms.

By analysing the ten focused participants' audiotapes of task performance, the students' communication seemed to be not continuous. Some students, although rather willing to communicate, could not fully engage in the 20 minutes assigned to them for their task performance. Their higher WTC was evident by their constant utterance in the primary part of task performance, but the last several minutes in the audiotapes showed long gaps of verbal speeches, or complete repetition of their previous ideas. This situation occurred in audiotaped task performance for three focused participants. Then the researcher invited these three participants to answer the interview question about their failure of utterances in the last several minutes. The following similar influential factor was then identified in their interview responses, as shown here:

When discussing to prepare for our following speech on travelling, we focused on the language knowledge about difficult grammatical structures and word choices. We thought that was enough. But in fact, in our task performance, although we were rather passionate to speak English, we didn't have various contents to talk about. We gradually felt less confident. (Yang, interview)

The students' lopsided emphasis on language forms during their self-preparation for task performance seemed to hinder their successful continuous utterance, thus demotivating their WTC gradually. This result corresponds with the previous study conducted by Eddy-U (2015), which claims that learners' clear and conscious attention to language usage decreased

their WTC. Too much attention on language forms could generate the students' more anxiety in their communication, because they would perceive higher levels of language competence required by the tasks. The pressures loaded by the focus on language forms could thus demotivate the students' WTC.

The researcher further analysed the reason why Chinese students were confronted with this issue. This problem could be attributed to the grammar-based examination system and the English teaching with a focus on language forms. Driven by the grammar-based examination, Chinese students pay much attention to the linguistic knowledge rather than the communicative meanings (Hu, 2002). Immersed in the traditional English teaching methods which highly value the language forms but ignore the students' communicative competence, the students fail to pay equal attention to both the language forms and meanings when preparing for language tasks by themselves. This situation impedes Chinese students to maintain their lasting WTC in their task performance, thus originated the adjusted TBLT practices in the following design.

5.4.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' WTC: The Teacher's Feedback to the Students' Preparation

To resolve the problem facing Chinese learners in their development in WTC, at the end of Cycle 2, the researcher further designed the teacher's feedback to the students' task preparation to adjust the TBLT practices. Specifically, this adjustment aimed to address the students' lopsided emphasis on language forms at the pre-task stage. Each lesson consisted of the main procedures to enhance the learners' WTC illustrated in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Framework for the adjusted TBLT to develop the students' WTC in Cycle 2

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The students' choice of the task topic The teacher provided the students with several tasks with different topics, and allowed them to choose one task to complete in their following task performance.
Pre-task stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The students' self-preparation The teacher guided the students to brainstorm the benefits of online shopping. The teacher's feedback to the students' preparation The teacher gave the students feedback about their self-preparation, and guided them to pay equal attention to both the language forms and the meanings.
Task cycle stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> One-way task plus two-way task The students were asked to complete the task in pairs in three stages as in the adjusted TBLT in Cycle 1. The lower proficient student in every pair was asked to complete the one-way task first. After 20-minute preparation, some pairs were selected to give a speech in front of the classroom to the whole class.
Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher corrected some errors in the students' task performance, including some grammatical structures and

focus stage	language usage.
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2. Finally, the students were asked to revise their monologues and dialogues by correcting their grammatical errors or refining their language usage.
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The students' self-preparation for their task performance was still implemented at the pre-task stage. The adjustment for the TBLT practices in this cycle lied in the teacher's feedback, both during and after the students' self-preparation. Specifically, during the students' self-preparation, the teacher walked around the classroom to provide some feedback, guiding students to pay equal attention to both the language forms and the language meanings. Below is an example obtained from the audiotapes showing how the researcher provided feedback to the students.

Student A: I guess online shopping is convenient and efficient.

Student B: But I think these two words have the similar meaning.

Student A: I don't think so.

Student B: What do you think?

Student A: Er, you can think of their Chinese meanings, they are different.

Teacher: If you cannot actually distinguish the meanings of these words, why not relate them to your topic, online shopping?

Student B: You mean, we can think of, er..., why it is convenience and efficient?

Teacher: Right. Go ahead.

Student A: It's convenient because, er..., we don't need to go out of home.

Student B: We can buy anything just at home.

Teacher: Well done. What about efficient?

Student B: Online shopping is efficient, because, er..., right, we can compare various goods from different shops at once.

Student A: And we can save our time to do anything else.

Teacher: You got the point. So are these two words the same?

Student A and B: No.

Teacher: Go on with some other benefits of online shopping.

In addition, after the students' self-preparation, the researcher also added the step of feedback in front of the entire class. The researcher shared some useful language knowledge prepared by some pairs of the students to the whole class. The teacher also summarised the students' ideas about the topic (the benefits of online shopping, as chosen by the students themselves) proposed by themselves in their self-preparation, and guided the students to construct a guideline for their following task performance by choosing some ideas appropriate for themselves. In general, the teacher's feedback to the students' self-preparation focused on the language meanings. The researcher instructed the students to prepare the contents they would discuss about in their following task performance, and to focus on the expression of language meanings. This aimed to address the students' lopsided emphasis on language forms and to facilitate their performance in the communicative tasks.

5.5. Conclusion

This study set out to adjust the TBLT practices in a cultural appropriate way to develop Chinese students' English learning. Underpinned by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks developed in Chapter 3, the researcher designed the adjusted TBLT practices to resolve the challenges caused by the sociocultural context and to maximise the benefits of TBLT on the four learning aspects. Guided by these research aims, the TBLT practices designed based on literature review in Cycle 1 were implemented in the Chinese classes in Cycle 2. Findings obtained from the data analysis in Cycle 2 helped answer the two research

questions. In particular, the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 answered the first research question about how TBLT affected Chinese students' English learning. Furthermore, the problems that emerged during the implementation of TBLT practices in Cycle 2 answered the research question 2.1 about the influence of the Chinese sociocultural context on the students' task performance. Finally, the further adjustments of TBLT practices developed at the end of Cycle 2 answered the research question 2.2 about the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context. Therefore, this section will summarise these findings in terms of how the adjusted TBLT practices addressed Chinese students' challenges caused by the sociocultural context and facilitated their development in the four learning aspects.

5.5.1. The Adjusted TBLT to Teach Grammar

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 to develop the students' grammar learning. The two major adjustments developed in Cycle 1 resulted in the students' acquisition of grammar knowledge and their awareness of focus on form. The corresponding relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits are shown in the following table.

Table 5.16 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to teach grammar

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 2
Grammatical input	The students' acquisition of grammar knowledge

The students' focus on form during task
performance

The students' awareness of focus on form
rather than on forms

These findings about the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices proved that the following two TBLT rationales can facilitate the grammar teaching. Initially, when providing the grammatical input in the pre-task stage, the researcher insisted the TBLT rationale of student-centred learning (Shang, 2010) and rejected the negative influences of teacher-centred grammar-translation teaching method in China (Hua, et al., 2011). The data collected from the participants' feedback evidenced the benefits of this rationale. Furthermore, the TBLT rationale of focus on form in the adjusted TBLT practices helped to balance the students' emphasis on language meanings and language forms (Ellis, 2003; Li et al., 2016), therefore enhanced the students' grammar learning in their task performance.

After investigating the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices, Cycle 2 further figured out some problems regarding the implementation of TBLT and the Chinese sociocultural factors that caused these problems. Based on these problems, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2. Figure 5.2 shows the corresponding relationships between these problems and further adjustments.

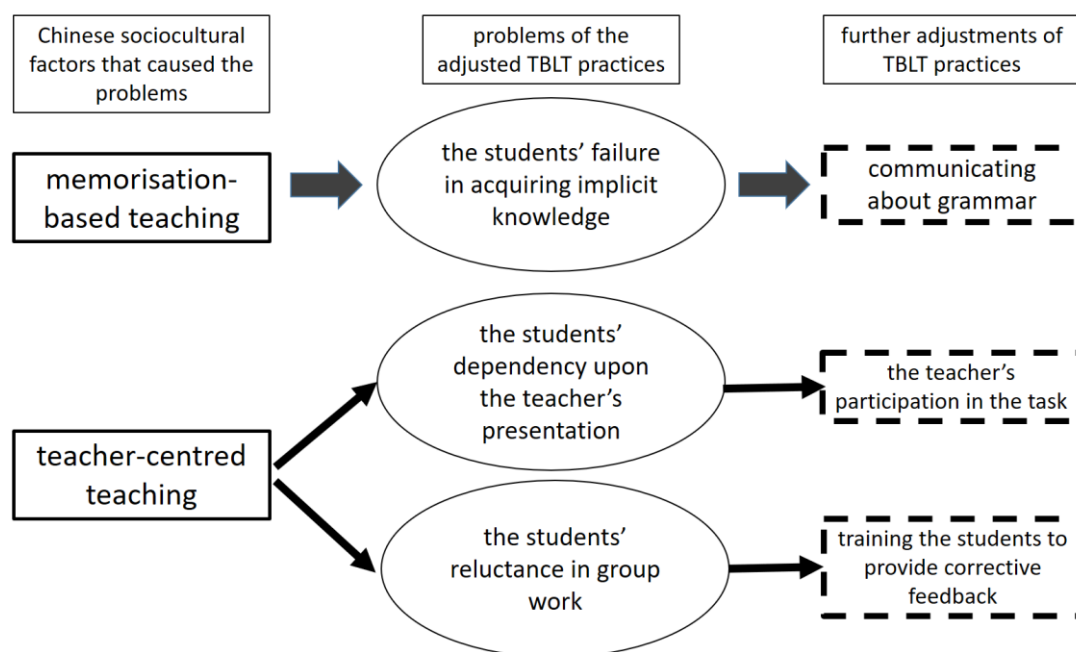


Figure 5.2 Relationships between the problems of TBLT to teach grammar and the further adjustments

Specifically, the problems investigated in Cycle 2 disclosed the influences of Chinese sociocultural context on the students' development of learner autonomy in TBLT. Firstly, the memorisation-based teaching in China (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996) caused the students' failure in acquiring the implicit knowledge, the teacher-centred teaching (Carless, 2004) caused the students' dependency upon the teachers' presentation and their reluctance in group work to dominate their own learning. To resolve these problems, the researcher further developed some adjustments of the TBLT practices. In detail, the students are guided to complete the tasks of communicating about grammar and provide corrective feedback during their task performance. The detailed implementation of these adjustments will be revealed in the following Cycle 3.

5.5.2. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 to develop the students' learner autonomy. The two major adjustments developed in Cycle 1 resulted in the students' enhanced learner autonomy in the student-centred teaching and learning style, as well as in the authentic language usage of TBLT. The corresponding relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits are shown in the following table.

Table 5.17 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to develop the students' learner autonomy

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 2
The students' automatic focus on meaning in pre-task planning	The students' enhanced learner autonomy in the student-centred teaching and learning style
More related task topics to the students' real life	The students' enhanced learner autonomy in the authentic language usage

These benefits corresponds with the previous studies from two perspectives. Initially, findings provide empirical evidence for the benefits of the TBLT rationales. In particular, findings prove that the student-centred (Ellis, 2003) and communication-based (Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 2004; Samuda & Bygate, 2008) tasks facilitate the students' language learning. Furthermore, findings are also compatible with the previous researchers' proposals about how to enhance the students' learner autonomy. Specifically, the current study proved the benefits of the learner-centred pedagogy (Palfreyman, 2003) and the students' engagement into the meaningful interaction (Vieira, 2017).

After investigating the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices, Cycle 2 further figured out some problems of the students' development in learner autonomy and the Chinese sociocultural factors that caused these problems. Based on these problems, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2. Figure 5.3 shows the corresponding relationships between these problems and further adjustments.

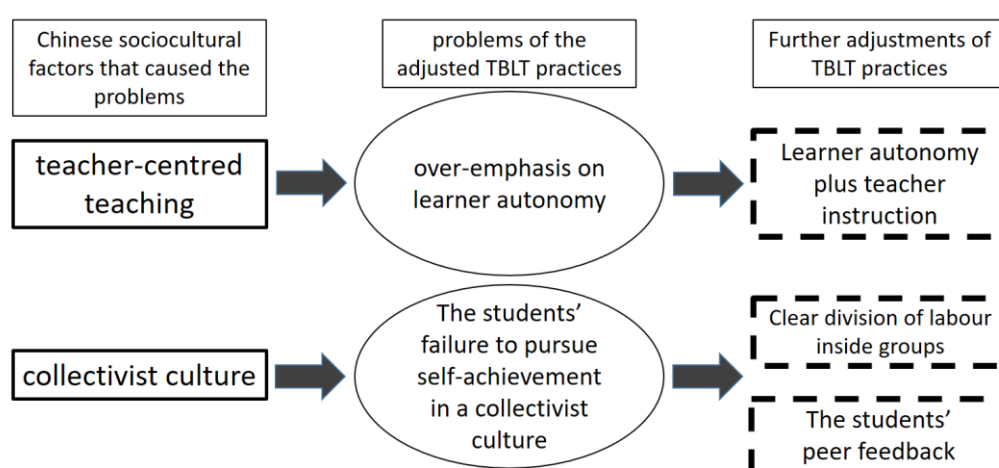


Figure 5.3 Relationships between the problems of TBLT to develop the students' learner autonomy and the further adjustments

Specifically, the problems investigated in Cycle 2 disclosed the influences of Chinese sociocultural context on the students' development of learner autonomy in TBLT. Firstly, the students' over emphasis on learner autonomy resulted in their "full learner autonomy" (Wielenga-Meijer et al., 2011, p.307) disclosed the students' over urgent endeavour in the student-centred learning opportunities. This is in line with the studies that have suggest the teachers' dominance and authority in the traditional Chinese classrooms (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996). Because Chinese students have not been provided with sufficient automatic learning opportunities in the classroom settings, some of them would contrive to emphasise too much on their learner autonomy. Moreover, the second problem about the students' failure in

pursuing self-achievement in TBLT also proves the influence of sociocultural context. In particular, the collectivist culture impeded Chinese students' enhanced learner autonomy. This also proves the necessity of considering sociocultural context when examining the benefits of a pedagogy (Lantolf, 2000; Van Compernell & Williams, 2013). To resolve these problems, the researcher combined the learner autonomy and teacher's instruction during the students' task performance, made clear division of labour inside the students' groups and guided the students to provide peer feedback. The detailed implementation of these adjustments will be revealed in the following Cycle 3.

5.5.3. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' LLS

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 to develop the students' LLS usage. The two major adjustments developed in Cycle 1 resulted in the students' more usage of all the six categories of LLS. Table 5.17 displays these benefits.

Table 5.18 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to develop the students' LLS

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 2
Strategy training in TBLT: during the three stages	The students' more overall usage of all the six categories of LLS
Strategy training in TBLT: five categories of strategies	The students' more overall usage of the direct LLS

The students' more overall usage of the
indirect LLS

These benefits corresponds with the previous studies that suggested the application of strategy training to develop the students' LLS usage (Chou, 2017; Field, 2008; Li & Qin, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The adjusted strategy training in this cycle was also developed based on the cognitive requirements of the three stages of TBLT and based on Chinese students' challenges in LLS usage (Jiang & Smith, 2009; Li & Qin, 2006; Rao, 2006; Yu & Wang, 2009). This corresponds with the previous researchers' suggestions to recognise the specific EFL settings (Green & Oxford, 1995; Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Rao, 2006) and to raise their awareness of LLS through their engagement into learning activities (Jang & Jimenez, 2011; Yu & Wang, 2009).

After investigating the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices, Cycle 2 further figured out some problems regarding the implementation of TBLT. Based on these problems, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2. Figure 5.4 shows the corresponding relationships between these problems and further adjustments.

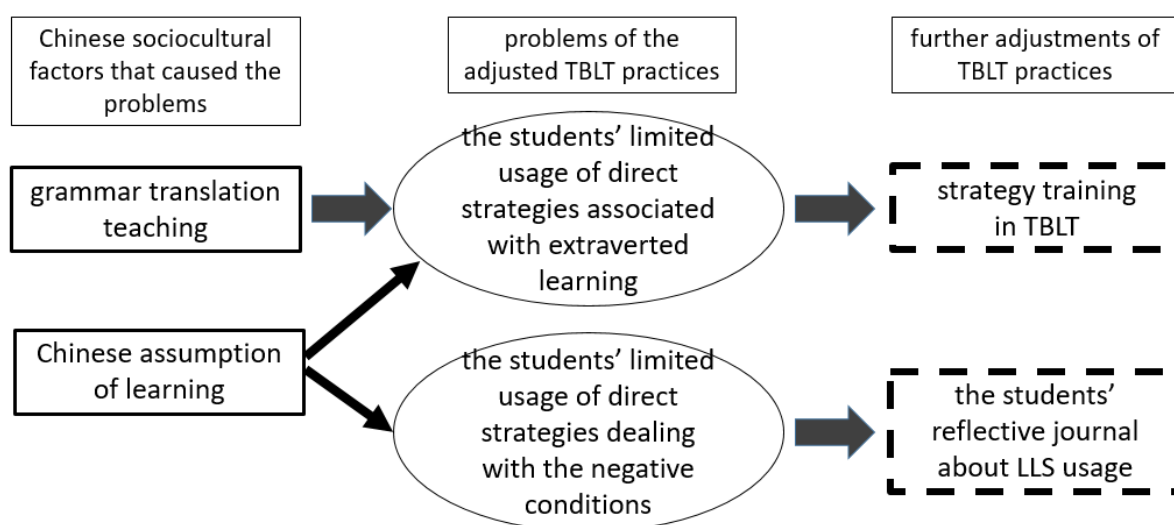


Figure 5.4 Relationships between the problems of TBLT to develop the students' LLS and the further adjustments

Specifically, the problems investigated in Cycle 2 disclosed the influences of Chinese sociocultural context on the students' development of LLS usage in TBLT. Firstly, the students in the current study showed limited usage of direct strategies associated with extraverted learning. The students' insistence to their learning habits in the grammar translation teaching and their traditional assumption about learning both influenced their limited usage of these strategies. This finding also aligns with the previous studies about the relation between language learning styles and LLS usage (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Li & Qin, 2006) and the theory of language transfer (Göbel & Vieluf, 2018; Odlin, 1989). Furthermore, the students used the direct strategies dealing with the negative conditions less frequently, because they perceived learning was painstaking. This finding is compatible with the previous study about the Chinese assumption about learning (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996). To resolve these problems, the researcher further develop some adjustments of the TBLT practices. Specifically, the researcher emphasised the strategies that the students used less frequently in the strategy training, and guided the students' to write reflect journals

about their LLS usage. The detailed implementation of these adjustments will be revealed in the following Cycle 3.

5.5.4. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' WTC

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1 to develop the students' WTC. The three major adjustments developed in Cycle 1 cooperated to increase the students' willingness to communicate in their task performance. Table 5.18 reveals these practices and their benefits.

Table 5.19 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to develop the students' WTC

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 1	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 2
	The students' development in WTC due to the rationales of TBLT
The students' choice of the task topic The students' self-preparation One-way task plus two-way task	The students' development in WTC due to the sociocultural context
	The students' development in WTC due to the adjusted TBLT practices

The researcher analysed the data obtained from the students' feedback about their enhanced WTC from three perspectives, to show the various reasons that are responsible for the

students' development. The students' engagement into the tasks, the Chinese sociocultural context and the adjusted TBLT practices cooperated to enhance the students' WTC. Findings in this field thus correspond with the previous studies in various aspects: positive classroom atmosphere (Eddy-U, 2015; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Zarrinabadi et al., 2014), more interesting and familiar topics (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 2011; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Zarrinabadi, 2014), less anxiety through preparation for the communication (Kang, 2005; Peng, 2012; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018), more motivation and sense of responsibility (MacIntyre et al., 2002; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018; Peng & Woodrow, 2010), as well as more friendly and assistant interlocutors (Cao & Philip, 2006; Kang, 2005; Syed & Kuzborska, 2018) could enhance the students' WTC. Findings also consolidates the influence of sociocultural factors on the students' language learning (Lantolf, 2000).

After investigating the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices, Cycle 2 further figured out some problems regarding the implementation of TBLT. Based on these problems, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2. Figure 5.5 shows the corresponding relationships between these problems and further adjustments.

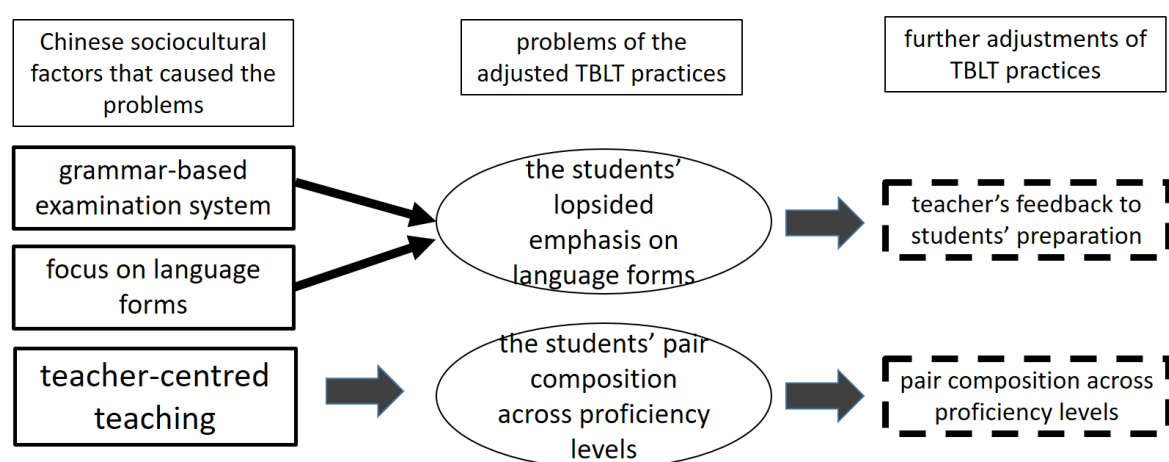


Figure 5.5 Relationships between the problems of TBLT to develop the students' WTC and the further adjustments

Specifically, the problems investigated in Cycle 2 disclosed the influences of Chinese sociocultural context on the students' development of LLS usage in TBLT. Initially, the grammar-based examination system and the English teaching emphasises a focus on language forms (Hu, 2002). This resulted in the first problem in the students' communication. Although the students developed their WTC in the communicative tasks, they focused on the accurate expression of language forms. This in turn impeded their further and consistent development of WTC in TBLT. Furthermore, the teacher-centred teaching in China causes the students' dependency on the teachers' guidance (Carless, 2004; Rao, 1996). This caused some students' failure in communication in TBLT, especially the less proficient ones. This finding is also in line with the previous studies (Eddy-U, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002) in that the students' perceived language competence indeed influenced their WTC. To resolve these problems, the researcher further develop some adjustments of the TBLT practices. Initially, the researcher added the teacher's feedback to the students' preparation, and required the students to form pairs with their peers with the different proficiency levels. The detailed implementation of these adjustments will be revealed in the following Cycle 3.

In conclusion, Cycle 2 implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 1 in the actual English classes in Chinese university. Based on findings that showed how the disjunctions between Chinese context and TBLT rationales impeded Chinese students' learning, Cycle 2 further adjusted some TBLT practices to address the problems. For further discussion, how findings in this cycle responded and extended previous literature will be analysed in Chapter 7, and contribution of this cycle as one stage of pedagogic innovation will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 Cycle 3: Intervention 2

To address the problems regarding the implementation of TBLT in China investigated in Cycle 2, the researcher further implemented the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3. This chapter thus follows the similar structure as Chapter 5 to report the benefits and problems of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3, and to disclose how the researcher further adjusted TBLT at the end of Cycle 3. Findings of Cycle 3, therefore, also answer the two research questions.

3. How does TBLT impact Chinese university students' English learning (i.e., shown by their perceptions, their English proficiency, their learning strategies)?
4. What are culturally appropriate TBLT practices in English classes of Chinese universities?
 - 2.3 What are the social and cultural factors in English classes of Chinese universities that influence the implementation of TBLT?
 - 2.4 How can TBLT practices be adjusted to better suit the sociocultural context of English classes in Chinese universities?

6.1. The Adjusted TBLT to Teach Grammar

Cycle 3 implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in the previous cycle to teach grammar. Three major development of the students' grammar learning and task performance revealed the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices. However, one remaining problem aroused the further adjustment of TBLT at the end of Cycle 3.

6.1.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Teach Grammar

Findings obtained from the students' interviews and group discussion disclosed an improvement in the students' grammar learning and their task performance.

6.1.1.1. The Students' Acquisition of Implicit Knowledge

The adjusted TBLT practices with an emphasis on grammar instruction triggered the students to be more conscious of the deep grammatical structures, thus motivated them to acquire implicit knowledge. Most of the students preferred the task-based grammar instruction to the traditional teacher's presentation and explanation method. Below is an exemplar excerpt.

To my surprise, what I couldn't indeed remember after teacher's explanation before, can be totally impressive to me now, because it is induced and summarised by myself. (Gao, interview)

Besides, the students' group discussion also provided evidence about their acquisition of implicit grammatical knowledge. As shown in the following dialogue, the two students were comparing the two correct sentences: "The figure for cars increased to 45%, occupying the largest proportion of people's expenditure." and the incorrect sentence "The figure for cars increased to 45%, occupied the largest proportion of people's expenditure".

Student A: The only difference between these two sentences is the usage of the verb "occupy".

Student B: Yes, obviously, the first correct sentence uses the verb in its form of a non-predicate verb. But I think the second sentence is also right.

Student A: But "occupy" should not in the passive way in this sentence.

Student B: Sure, but it can be used in the past tense, just like "increased", describing something which happens before.

Student A: Yes, you're right. Er..... but it cannot be right, because there is only one sentence, so "occupy" should be used in adverbial structures (expressed in Chinese).

Student B: Oh, right, you're right. So.....if we add here an "and", it should be correct.

Student A: Yes, I guess so. Two sentences, two (predicate) verbs.

In this dialogue, the students effectively talked about the underlying grammatical rules in their task performance. By contrasting the usage of the present participle "occupying" and the past participle "occupied", the student indeed acquired the explicit knowledge of non-predicate verbs. This was followed by their further analysis about the function of non-predicate verbs, namely, to add information to the sentence as an adverbial modifier. At the same time of promoting their meaningful communication, they also analysed the grammatical features and functions of non-predicate verbs and gained the implicit knowledge of this grammar point.

Besides, the t-test results also proved the students' acquisition of implicit grammar knowledge. The table below shows the students' changes in their perceptions towards grammar learning in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 when they responded to the item "I need the rote memorisation of the grammatical formula".

Table 6.1 Differences in the students' perceptions towards memorisation in grammar learning after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3	T	P
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n=122	n=122		
<hr/>			
M(SD)	M(SD)		
<hr/>			
4.53 (0.69)	2.78(0.65)	2.47	.03
<hr/>			

The t-test result showed that there was a significant difference in perceptions of the students after the two cycles towards this question ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2.

The adjustment of TBLT practices in Cycle 2 contributed to the students' acquisition of implicit knowledge in Cycle 3 from two perspectives. Initially, the design of the "communicating about grammar" tasks provided the students opportunities to analyse the grammatical structures in their communication, therefore integrated the focus on forms and focus on meanings (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long 2000) and guided the students to acquire the implicit knowledge in their authentic language usage (Willis, 1996). The benefits thus proved the success of TBLT rationales and disclosed how TBLT avoided the negative influence of the memorisation-based teaching in China. Furthermore, the teacher's participation into the tasks supplemented the purely students-centred TBLT to provide teacher's instruction. This adjustment of TBLT simultaneously insisted the students' self-learning in their task performance and provided the teacher's instruction to facilitate the implicit knowledge acquisition. Therefore, the adjusted TBLT applied the TSLT rationale (Carless, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Li et al., 2016) to link the traditional teacher's instruction and the

student-centred TBLT. In summary, the integration of TBLT and TSLT rationales in Cycle 3 facilitated the students' acquisition of implicit knowledge in their grammar learning.

6.1.1.2. The Students' Achievement in Self-learning

The teacher's participation in the tasks allowed the students to either automatically analyse the grammatical rules based on the teacher's feedback or figure out their own incorrectness in their grammar learning. Without the teacher's direct guidance in the form of the presentation and explanation of grammatical structures, the students were motivated to analyse and synthesise the grammatical rules by themselves. In contrast to the traditional grammar-translation teaching in China, TBLT fostered students' opportunities to learn automatically and analyse actively. Two of the participants expressed their preference for the teacher's participation in such a manner as illustrated in their feedback below.

Unlike in the previous classes where teacher gave us the direct and definite guidance, teacher's feedback in today's task left the chance to explore the grammar to us students. I think it's quite useful. (Chen, interview)

After pointing out the errors, teacher didn't give the answer about how to correct it. I had to correct it by myself, I think it's a better way for me to learn. (Ma, guided journal)

The two participants' feedbacks revealed how they improved their self-learning in the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3. Chen and Ma both asserted the advantage of TBLT compared with the traditional teacher's instruction. In the adjusted TBLT in Cycle 3, the teacher pointed out the students' errors in their language usage, but "left the chance" to the students themselves to explore "how to correct" them. Therefore, the adjusted TBLT

practices in Cycle 3 employed the rationale of TSLT to integrate the student-centred TBLT and the teacher-centred traditional teaching (Carless, 2004).

Moreover, the t-test results also proved the students' confidence in their self-learning in Cycle 2. One question that was designed to explore the participants' perceptions towards the student-centred teaching rationale like TBLT was: "I think I can learn the target knowledge during my own authentic use of English in TBLT". The data analysis showed a significant difference in the students' perceptions after Cycle 2 and cycle 3 ($p < 0.05$). This demonstrated that the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 did enhance the students' confidence in self-learning.

Table 6.2 Differences in the students' perceptions towards the teacher's instruction after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
n=122	n=122	T	P
M(SD)	M(SD)		
2.67 (0.72)	3.83 (0.66)	2.36	.02

6.1.1.3. The Students' Effective Group Discussion

After training the students to give and receive corrective feedback, they were encouraged to interact in group work with more efficiency. According to the interview responses and journal answers, all ten participants expressed their shift in attitudes towards group work as shown in the three examples below:

Unlike the interaction between us and the teacher, we were more active and brave when communicating with our peers. (Sun, interview)

Our teacher couldn't give feedback to every group, but my partners gave me useful help. (Li, guided journal)

Once I failed to tell the difference between the two "doing" s in the sentences like "Considering all the factors can improve our all-round understanding of one issue." and "You should go, considering all the factors." One of my partners showed the same confusion, so we further thought of the sentence structures and finally found out the difference. (Zhao, guided journal)

Findings obtained from the audiotaped discussions demonstrated the effectiveness of this training provided to the students about how to provide feedback to each other. Group members appeared to have more effective group discussions by providing each other with more corrective feedback. The following example occurred when two students were discussing the usage of "to do" and "done" in the correct sentence "He has a lot of meetings to attend next week" and the incorrect sentence "He has a lot of meetings attended next week".

Student A: I think the second sentence should also be right, because the meetings can be attended, they are in a passive sentence.

Student B: But do you remember, done has another meaning?

Student A: Yes, it shows the thing has been finished.

Student B: So, the meetings have been attended or have not?

Student A: So you mean, “to attend” here focuses on the future possibility?

Student B: I guess so, we can have a discussion with our teacher.

Besides, the t-test results also proved the students’ preference to group work in Cycle 3. Two questions were designed to explore the participants’ perceptions towards group discussion in TBLT: “I think discussing grammar together with my classmates can help me to understand the grammar knowledge more clearly.” and “I learnt some collaborative abilities from my partners during our task performance.” The significant difference shown in the data obtained after Cycle 2 and cycle 3 indicated their preference to group work in terms of both their grammar learning and collaborative ability development.

Table 6.3 Differences in the students’ perceptions toward group work’s influence on grammar learning after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3	T	P
n=122	n=122		
M(SD)	M(SD)		
2.73 (0.74)	3.92 (0.68)	2.40	.02

Table 6.4 Differences in the students’ perceptions towards group work’s influence on collaborative abilities after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
n=122	n=122	T	P
M(SD)	M(SD)		
2.81 (0.72)	4.07 (0.67)	2.39	.02

6.1.2. Problem of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Teach Grammar: The Students' Requirement for Related Grammatical Input

While the adjusted TBLT in Cycle 3 resolved the problems in grammar teaching in Cycle 2, the qualitative data collected in Cycle 3 still indicated one problem regarding the students' grammar learning in TBLT. Three participants proposed that there was a lack of language input to facilitate their ability to communicate about the grammar task. Below is one exemplar excerpt.

What challenges me a lot is that I lack certain grammatical knowledge related to non-predicate verbs. I'm not sure about the different tenses of verb, I can't tell the difference between "did" and "done", they sometimes look the same to me. Furthermore, I don't know why "done" can be used both after "have" and "is".
(Zhao, guided journal)

By looking back to Cycle 2, the lack of knowledge on tenses of verbs could also impede the students' learning of attributive clauses. The proposal of this lack of related knowledge caught the researcher's attention. By interviewing the three students with this feedback, a mismatch between the traditional teaching method and TBLT was evident. They said:

I'm used to teacher's guidance in the previous classes, but now, in this task, I have to know every possibility to analyse the sentences. Grammar is complex, and I guess one point can be intermixed with some others. In teacher's presentation before, the one point I didn't know exactly could be explained by the teacher. Because they were not the focused grammar point, so before I understood it completely, I just moved on with the teacher to pay more attention to the focused one. But today, in the grammar task in which I should analyse the grammatical rules by myself, I cannot move on with anything confusing me. (Cui, interview)

I find the fundamental knowledge useful in that they can help me construct a comprehensive knowledge system. I need to compare and contrast the different grammar structures so that I can apply them in a correct and appropriate way. (Ma, interview)

This participant's interview answers showed that the traditional teaching method in China dominated by the teacher's instruction allowed the students a "gap" in their comprehension of the target grammar and the related grammar. Failing to fully understand some related grammatical structures would not prevent the students from further acquiring the target grammatical structure. Even though some related grammatical structures confused their understanding, the students' focus was still on the target grammatical structure, and their acquisition of the target grammar could be temporarily assisted and supported by the teacher's seemingly sufficient explanation on the related grammar. This assistance, however,

deprived the students of their opportunities for further exploration of language knowledge. Therefore, the traditional teaching in China that is dominated by the teachers' instruction caused the problem in Cycle 3.

6.1.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 3 to Teach Grammar: Fundamental Grammatical Input

In order to solve the remained problem observed in Cycle 3, the researcher made one further adjustment of TBLT at the end of this cycle: fundamental grammatical input was added in the pre-task stage. The following table revealed the procedures of the adjusted TBLT practice in Cycle 3 to teach grammar.

Table 6.5 Framework for TBLT to teach grammar (absolute construction) in Cycle 3

Pre-task stage	1. Training of students' corrective feedback The students were encouraged to provide corrective feedback to each other by analysing examples in their task performance in Cycle 2.
	2. Fundamental grammatical input The teacher presented a short passage to students in which there were several examples using grammatical knowledge about word classes and adverbial clause.
Task cycle stage	1. Task --- communicating about grammar The students were asked to work in groups to compare and analyse correct and erroneous sentences with absolute construction.
	2. The teacher's participation in the task The teacher provided corrective feedback to the students during their group discussion.
	3. After 30-minute discussion, some students were selected to present their analysis on the rules of absolute construction to the whole class.

Language focus stage	The teacher explained the rules of absolute construction: (with/without) + noun phrase + non-predicate structure (non-predicate verb, noun, adjective, adverb, prepositional objective phrase).
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To address the problem of the insufficient fundamental grammatical input, the researcher added the fundamental grammatical input in Cycle 3. The theoretical guideline underlying this revision was the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), which put primary importance on the comprehensible input provided to the language learners. Understanding the language input is viewed as the only mechanism contributing to the increase of linguistic competence. In the TBLT grammar instruction, therefore, the comprehensible input was significant for learners to acquire the grammatical knowledge by completing tasks with their grasped and comprehended grammatical input.

The target grammar in Cycle 3 was absolute construction, which would involve some fundamental grammatical knowledge of the word classes, non-predicate verbs and adverbial clause. The researchers thus provided in the pre-task stage some short texts as the language input including the related knowledge. Since non-predicate verbs was already learned in Cycle 2, the texts mainly represented the word classes and adverbial clause. The language input was also analysed by the students themselves. Unlike Cycle 2 in which the students communicated about grammar in the grammar tasks, this language input stage for Cycle 3 required the students to read the texts, analyse the grammatical knowledge themselves, and complete a test examining the related knowledge. The test consisted of 15 multiple choices and 5 sentence translation tasks, each of which equalled 1 point. The test scores showed a satisfying result, the mean score of all the students was 18 in 20, indicating their acquisition of the fundamental knowledge imparted in this pre-task stage.

6.2. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2 to develop the students' learner autonomy in this cycle. The students' three major developments revealed that the adjusted TBLT practices enhanced their learner autonomy. However, one remaining problem aroused the further adjustment of TBLT at the end of Cycle 3.

6.2.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

Findings obtained from the data analysis in Cycle 3 show the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3 to enhance the students' learner autonomy, mainly in terms of the following three aspects: the students' immediate rewards of self-learning, enhanced sense of responsibility and awareness of language development. All the three developments disclosed the students' improvement in their learner autonomy.

6.2.1.1. The Students' Immediate Rewards of Self-learning

To solve some students' over emphasis on their learner autonomy generating to their inefficient efforts in English learning, the researcher combined the teacher's instruction and students' learner autonomy together in Cycle 2. Specifically, in the pre-task planning, the teacher guided the students to establish their narrow and rational learning goals to enhance their learner autonomy. Findings obtained from the students' interview and journal responses after Cycle 3 disclosed the students' identified benefits of this pedagogical intervention. Below are some exemplar excerpts.

Before the task, our teacher gave us some learning goals to choose. To my surprise, these goals were rather narrow. Because we are used to the comprehensive leaning goals including various language skills and even some other abilities, if given the chance, I would set up a goal to integrate different goals together. But the result was quite exciting, I got the immediate reward by choosing and pursuing a narrow goal in my task performance. I could focus more on the only one goal, and make more efforts to fulfil this goal, rather than get distracted by other things. (Zhao, interview)

Based on our teacher's suggestion, I chose to learn some useful expressions in today's task. But our teacher didn't give us the clear instruction about what to learn, so I found out them by myself. Since our task was to describe and compare two possible sites for a supermarket, I thought the comparison between objects must occur. So I focused on how to express the comparison and contrast. I used "by contrast, contrary to, compared with, distinct, diverse in" to express my ideas. I think that my learning goal chosen by myself inspires me to explore my potentials. I'm so happy. (Cui, guided journal)

Before I started to complete the task, I established my learning goal. I found it really useful in that this goal helped me to plan the appropriate learning strategies. I planned to practice attributive clause in today's task. I focused on its function as to show the relationship between two sentences. So during my task performance, I firstly planned two sentences, then found out their relations, and finally changed the sentences into one by using attributive clause. I find this type of learning quite efficient for me. I can take control of my own English learning. (Yang, guided journal)

The participants' responses showed that the adjusted TBLT helped them enhance their learner autonomy after they established their own learning goals. Specifically, Zhao learned more by focusing on more narrow and easily pursued learning goals. To establish his learning goals, Cui analysed his language learning process and fulfilled his goals in self-learning. In addition,

Yang chose appropriate learning strategies to fulfil her learning goals. Consequently, the realisation of their learning goals enhanced their sense of achievement and confidence in English learning. In summary, this TBLT practice helped Chinese EFL learners develop their learner autonomy.

Besides, the t-test results also suggest that the students' demonstrated an enhanced confidence in their self-established learning goals after Cycle 3. One question was repeated after both Cycle 2 and cycle 3: "What I need to learn during my task performance is decided by my teacher." Since the TBLT practices in Cycle 2 encouraged students to plan for their own learning goals under the instruction of their teacher, the data analysis for this questionnaire item revealed a significant difference between students' answers after Cycle 2 and cycle 3.

Table 6.6 Differences in students' perceptions toward self-established learning goals after Cycle 2 and cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3	T	P
n=122	n=122		
M(SD)	M(SD)		
4.68 (0.72)	2.61 (0.69)	2.37	.02

As shown in the table above, the mean values showed that in Cycle 2, most students strongly agreed with this question ($M= 4.68$, $SD=0.72$), indicating that they were used to the traditional teacher-centred teaching where learning goals were established and explained by their teachers. Whereas after implementing the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3, they disagreed with this question ($M=2.61$, $SD=0.69$), indicating their changed preference to their self-established learning goals. The t-test result showed that there was a significant difference in perceptions of students after the two cycles toward these questions ($p<0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 on students' learner autonomy by inspiring them to plan for their own English learning.

Findings of Cycle 3 that show the students' awards in self-learning correspond the previous studies from two perspectives. Initially, this benefit in Cycle 3 provides empirical evidence for the previous studies about how to enhance students' learner autonomy. In details, specific learning goals (Zou, 2011) and efficient interaction between the teachers and students (Yang & Fang, 2008) can facilitate the students' development of learner autonomy. Furthermore, the rationales of TBLT, namely the emphasis on student-centred learning (Carless, 2004) can benefit the student to enhance their learner autonomy (Vieira, 2017).

6.2.1.2. The Students' Sense of Responsibility

After assigning the students clear division of labour in their group work, they were encouraged to participate more actively in their group work with more sense of responsibility. This indicated their enhanced learner autonomy. In their interview responses and guided journal answers, all the ten participants expressed their enhanced sense of responsibility as shown in the three examples below:

I acted as the recorder in our group today, because our other members said my English was better. In our group work, I became more aware of my responsibility to get my job done better, since I must live up to my partners' expectation. So, I gave some suggestions about how to better express our meanings in English, and received my partners' approval. I'm so happy to make contribution to my group. (Ma, interview)

I once hated the group work, especially in English classes, because I'm shy to speak English in front of my peer classmates. But in our group today, everyone had one specific role to play. I found that I should also shoulder my responsibility to help our team to finish the task. I love this feeling to be helpful to others. (Sun, guided journal)

Previously, some people didn't have passion on group discussion, so sometimes our group work was dominated by just one or two classmates whose English level was higher. But now, with different responsibilities to shoulder, I find most of us are willing to express his/her ideas. It's like such a driving force that no one wants to drag the team down. (Li, interview)

Findings obtained from the students' audiotaped discussions also demonstrated the benefits of the division of their responsibilities. In addition to undertaking their own responsibilities, some students could also remind others of their work during their group cooperation.

Learner A (ice-breaker): One advantage for this plan is that it is close to the residential area in the north, therefore the local inhabitants can get there more easily.

Learner B (team leader): I think you got the point! I agree with you.

Learner C (wrap-up presenter): Yes, and maybe we can say "the local inhabitants have an easier access to it". We've just learned the word "access", remember it?

Learner A (ice-breaker): Yes, it sounds better. Learner D, can you refine my idea like that? Thanks.

Learner D (recorder): Of course, I've put it down.

The dialogue occurred when this group was discussing the advantage of one proposed site. As shown in the dialogue, the wrap-up presenter helped the ice-breaker refine the sentence by using a newly-acquired word "access". This should have been the original work for the recorder. Then the ice-breaker who contributed this idea reminded the recorder to take note of this refined sentence. During this process, all these three group members autonomously participated into the task performance and contributed to each other's language learning. Their learning autonomy was thus enhanced.

Besides, the t-test results also found that students' preference to the division of their responsibilities in group work in Cycle 3. One question was designed to explore participants' perception to their division of responsibilities in group work: "I think every member in my group has great contribution to our group." Since the TBLT practices in Cycle 2 encouraged students to undertake different jobs in their group discussions, the data analysis for this questionnaire item revealed a significant difference between students' answers after Cycle 2 and cycle 3.

Table 6.7 Differences in students' perceptions toward group members' contribution after Cycle 2 and cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
		T	P
n=122	n=122		

M(SD)	M(SD)		
2.81 (0.74)	4.74 (0.68)	2.40	.03

As shown in the table above, the mean values showed that in Cycle 2, students slightly disagreed with this question (M= 2.81, SD=0.74), indicating that in most students' mind, not all the members in their groups made a great contribution by active involvement. This result was in line with the previous interview answer provided by one focused participant (Li). Whereas with the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2, they agreed with this question (M=4.74, SD=0.68) after Cycle 3. This showed that they identified the changes in most students' participation into the task performance. The t-test result showed that there was a significant difference in perceptions of students after the two cycles towards this question ($p<0.05$). This demonstrated the benefit of adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 on students' learner autonomy by encouraging their contribution to their team.

This benefit of the adjusted TBLT practices to enhance the students' sense of responsibility is in line with the previous studies about the students' participatory structures in TBLT. Specifically, the students gain more development in their language usage when performing tasks together with others than individually (Storch, 2008). Furthermore, the collaborative patterns of interaction in the students' task performance facilitate their language learning (Storch, 2008; Watanabe & Swain, 2007), and appropriate interactive roles given to each member also promote the students' active task performance (Yule & Macdonald, 1990).

6.2.1.3. The Students' Awareness of Language Development

After guiding students to provide peer feedback to each other in the language focus stage, they were more aware of their own language development, indicating their enhanced learner autonomy. Below are some exemplar excerpts of the participants' interview and journal response.

When I gave feedback to my partners' language usage, I gained the sense of achievement from my acquisition of this language point. During this process of giving feedback to others, I must firstly analyse the sentence by myself, I find this beneficial, both to myself and to my partners. (Chen, interview)

I think it's better for me when my errors in language usage are pointed out by my classmates rather than by my teacher. For example, my group member told me, some words led the structure of "to doing" instead of "to do". This was found when she corrected my sentence "Before you get down to build the supermarket, you must ensure its potential customers." In this sentence, "to build" should be corrected into "to building". In fact, our teacher had taught us why, about the obscure grammatical rules, but I couldn't remember. Then my classmate told me that she also made mistake on it, but she regarded the verb "doing" as a noun, led by another verb, it was just like the phrases "look forward to doing" and "pay attention to doing". It's quite an easy and helpful way for me to learn it. So, I really appreciate my classmates' help to my English leaning. (Sun, guided journal)

Learners' interview answers and guided journal answers revealed that during their peer feedback to each other, they learned to depend on themselves to analyse the implicit knowledge of English, rather than just passively absorb what their teachers taught them. Both the process of correcting others' language usage (Chen) and receiving others' evaluation (Sun) enhanced their awareness of their language development.

6.2.2. Problem of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy: The Students' Failure to Meet the Requirement of Examination

After the pedagogical intervention in Cycle 3, one problem regarding the students' development of learner autonomy in TBLT still plagued them. This problem was associated with the examination system in China, which was evident in the following participant's responses. `

I learn English mainly for the purpose of passing the various examinations. These records or qualification will assist me to pursue higher education and decent jobs in the future. As a result, if my teacher does not tell me this one will occur in that examination, I will lose my motivation to learn it. (Wang, interview)

Finding obtained from the participant's answer suggested that Chinese EFL learners regarded passing the examinations as one significant learning goal, their learner autonomy was thus diminished by their utilitarian intention and provincial starting point. This was in line with the previous findings that the requirement of the examination system impacted Chinese students' learner autonomy (Benson et al., 2003; Halstead & Zhu, 2009). In order to obtain some further insights into their understanding of English learning, the researcher further asked the focused participants one question in the following semi-structured interviews. "What do you think is the best teaching method to help you pass the English examinations?" The following answer from one participant was typical and worthy of study.

Although I really enjoy to complete the tasks in our English classes, I don't think they can directly help us pass our English examinations. It'll be much better if our teacher added some traditional explanation and presentation about the language knowledge which will

occur in our examinations. Then we students can practice by doing some exercises and making errors. Finally, the teacher corrects these errors and explains how to avoid. So the entire process can be summarised as an explanation-practice-explanation method. (Ma, interview)

The participant's preferred teaching procedure is slightly different from the traditional 3P teaching model (presentation-practice-production). What the students desired was the teacher's explanation directly about the examination rather than about the language itself, because the learning goal underlying this teaching method was to meet the requirement of the examinations rather than to acquire the language. The examination-oriented teaching in China thus caused the students' perception of English learning, and this perception could be naturally obstructive to the development of their learner autonomy.

6.2.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 3 to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy: Task-based Examination Preparation

The students' demand to learn for the examinations can be regarded as a double-edged sword. On one hand, their strong desire to pass the examinations can motivate their English learning, thus enhancing their learner autonomy. On the other hand, their mere learning goals concentrated on the language knowledge required in the examinations, limit their English learning by abandoning certain useful language abilities. To distinguish these two aspects of Chinese learners' emphasis on examinations, the researcher designed the task-based examination preparation in Cycle 3, as shown in the following table. This adjusted TBLT practice integrated both the students' preparation for examinations and their English language learning in authentic language usage.

Table 6.8 Framework for task-based examination preparation to enhance Chinese EFL learners' learner autonomy in Cycle 3

Pre-task stage	The students were asked to learn one English passage with 10 questions in reading comprehension by themselves.
Task cycle stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The students were asked to work in groups for the task “Suppose you were English teachers, analyse the questions and answers in this reading comprehension.” 2. After 20-minute preparation, some students were selected to present the skills discussed by their groups to the whole class.
Language focus stage	Finally, the students were asked to summarise the skills to do the reading comprehension.

Based on students' responses to the question “Which part in your English examinations is most difficult to you”, reading comprehension was chosen as the learning content in the task in Cycle 3. In the task-based examination preparation, the students formed different groups in the class to investigate the skills for solving the reading comprehension questions correctly and efficiently. The task was “Suppose you were English teachers, analyse the questions and answers in this reading comprehension.” Before the task performance, the students had finished ten reading comprehension questions according to one English passage. During the task cycle stage in Cycle 3, the students analysed different task types (such as multiple choice, matching, gap filling and short answer), language points (such as a synonym replacement, a paraphrase for a sentence, a grammatical structure or the general idea for a paragraph) by

themselves and presented their own answering skills to their peer classmates in their group discussion. The most frequently discussed skills in their group discussion included summarising the main idea of paragraphs and the passage, guessing word meaning, splitting the long sentences, inferring the author's meaning, ect.

At the end of Cycle 3, in order to examine this adjusted TBLT practice, the researcher implemented the task-based examination preparation in one class. For instance, one paragraph and its associated reading comprehension question is:

The magazine cover showing an attractive mother holding a cute baby is hardly the only Madonna-and-child image on newsstands this week. There are also stories about newly adoptive-and newly-single-mom Sandra Bullock as well as the usual "Jennifer Aniston is pregnant" news. Practically every week features at least one celebrity mom or mom-to-be, smiling on the newsstands.

We learn from Paragraph 2 that

- A. celebrity moms are a permanent source for gossip
- B. single mothers with babies deserve greater attention
- C. news about pregnant celebrities is entertaining
- D. having children is highly valued by the public (*the right answer)

The following transcripts of the students' task performance showed their analysis of skills to answer this question.

Learner A: Normally, the topic sentence is the first sentence at the beginning of the paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph.

Learner B: But this is not true for this paragraph. There is not an apparent topic sentence here.

Learner C: Yes, I agree with you. So how can we answer this question?

Learner A: You know what? When I did this question, I deduced the main answer by collecting and synthesising the ideas of all the sentences in this paragraph.

Learner C: Does it work? Let me see. All the sentences give us some examples. So, the whole paragraph is about the celebrity moms. They are always on the magazine covers.

Answer C?

Learner A: Right, Answer C is partially right. But it's too superficial. What the author really wants to express is D, the attention and respect from the public, but not only about entertainment. Can this make sense?

Learner C: Yes, I missed the last choice.

Learner B: What I'd like to add is that the main idea of one paragraph must serve the main idea of the whole text.

Learner C: The entire passage is about raising the children, not about the celebrity or entertainment news.

Learner A: So we can target our answer on D, it's closely related to the main idea of the passage.

Learner C: Sounds great, it's quite clear to me now.

As shown in this dialogue, during the process of task-based examination preparation, the three students talked about and thus acquired the problem-solving skills of deducing main ideas of paragraphs by synthesising meanings of the sentences and by referring to the main idea of the passage. The students simultaneously developed their exam-oriented skills and communicative competence in English in the process of solving and then further analysing English examination questions by themselves. The adjusted TBLT practice in Cycle 3 of

task-based examination preparation thus provided Chinese students opportunities to expand their English learning experience from merely solving the examination problems to further analysing them, thus enhanced their learner autonomy.

6.3. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' LLS

6.3.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' LLS

6.3.1.1. The Students' Raised Awareness of the Limited Used Strategies

Findings obtained from Cycle 2 revealed that the problems of Chinese learners' LLS usage lied in their limited usage of some strategies, as shown in the subsection of 5.3.2. To enhance the students' usage of these strategies, the adjusted TBLT practices implemented in Cycle 3 aimed to raise the students' awareness of these strategies and to practice their application. Therefore, merely the comparison for the students' usage of these nine limited used strategies between Cycle 2 and cycle 3, would directly reveal the benefits of the adjusted TBLT in Cycle 3. This part of data analysis results thus are presented here as follows.

Table 6.9 Mean values for usage frequency of the 10 strategies after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Item number	Language learning strategies	After Cycle 2	After Cycle 3
		M(SD)	M(SD)

3	I create sounds or images to remember new words	2.9(0.86)	3.5(0.73)
4	I create mental pictures to remember new words	2.8(0.66)	3.4(0.78)
22	I try not to translate word for word	2.7(0.72)	3.4(0.75)
25	When I can't think of a word during conversation, I use gestures	2.9(0.80)	3.3(0.76)
28	I guess what the other person will say next	2.8(0.79)	3.4(0.77)
31	I use my mistakes to help me do better	2.8(0.74)	3.3(0.80)
39	I try to relax when afraid of using English	2.8(0.82)	3.6(0.68)
42	I notice if I am tense or nervous	2.9(0.73)	3.2(0.73)
45	I ask others to speak slowly or repeat when I	2.8(0.79)	3.7(0.67)

don't understand

As shown in the table, all the nine limited used strategies experienced an increase in usage frequency after Cycle 3. The comparison between mean values after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 even showed that some previously less used strategies were currently used at a high level (ranging above 3.5), such as the item 3, 39 and 45.

Two focused participants' interview answers after Cycle 3 also disclosed their raised awareness of these limited used strategies.

I was used to resort to translation when expressing my ideas, to be specific, I organised my ideas in Chinese, and then translate them into English. This was still used now, but I also tried to avoid the translation between these two languages in most case. When I need assistance in understanding of some sentences or contexts in English, I tried to explain them in English. I set the rule for myself that no Chinese in the English classes. This strategy offers me more chances to practise my English. (Cui, guided journal)

Before our strategy training today, I didn't really know that I should pay attention to my attitudes of being nervous or afraid in my English learning. I once thought they were common conditions for every learner so it was not necessary to deal with them. But now I know that I can use some affective strategies to release my pressures from these negative attitudes. I tried to use these strategies, and felt really better in my English learning. Learning can be enjoyable and relaxing, I enjoy it a lot. (Li, interview)

Specifically, Cui explained how he applied strategy 22 and Li provided examples for her usage of strategy 39 and 42. Furthermore, the reflective journals collected from other participants who were not focused participants, also provided evidence to confirm the benefits of adjusted TBLT practice in this cycle.

I was the interviewee today. I told a story about a flood when I was a little girl. This was my true experience. So I described many details. When I found difficulties in describing my parents' actions to save me and some property belongings in the flood, such as to boost me up the wall, to chain the chair to the door, to bail water out from the house, etc. I just acted them out to my partner. I find this really efficient to facilitate our conversation, giving a clear and vivid assistance to understanding the expressions. At the same time, in the final language focus stage, I find these actions I performed in our conversation gave me a deeper impression of these expression.

In addition, audiotapes of students' task performance also recorded the details of their application of these previously less used strategies. For example, learner A acted as the interviewee, describing a car accident. In her dialogue with learner B, she created a sound of the word to facilitate her partner's understanding of her expression. Although this was slightly different in the strategy in item 3, which referred to students' usage of sounds in their endeavour of memorising words, this strategy could also assist these two students to memorise words after their task performance, which was proved by another student's interview answer. In terms of learner B, he used the strategy in item 45 to request his partner's repetition and explanation of the word he did not understand.

Learner A: The driver let out a terrific shriek.

Learner B: Sorry, but what do you mean by "shriek"?

Learner A: Shriek, S-H-R-I-R-E-K, to shout loudly, because of horror, like Ah... (the sound imitating the action of a shriek).

Learner A: Ok, a shriek. But what did the driver see?

6.3.1.2. The Students' Development of Problem-solving Abilities

Apart from raised awareness of the limited used strategies in Cycle 3, the qualitative data also revealed the students' development of problem-solving abilities during their task performance. The ten focused participants' interview answers and guided journal answers, as well as all the students' self-reports in their reflective journals, all provided evidences, as shown in the example below:

By learning how to apply the strategies to facilitate my English learning, I also begin to analyse and manage my own learning process. Especially in my interaction with others in English, I figure out two directions of problems, one for my understanding of others and the other for my expression of my own ideas. I can and should use different strategies to solve these problems. (Ma, interview)

Most students expressed their enhanced abilities to analyse and resolve the language learning problems during their task performance by applying different strategies, as Ma showed in her interview response.

Furthermore, although the strategy training in Cycle 3 focused on the nine limited applied strategies in Cycle 2, students demonstrated a rather comprehensive application of some other strategies by connecting some strategies together to resolve the problems, as shown in the following audiotapes of their task performance.

Learner A: A big truck had tumbled down an embankment, and flames were crawling across its cab.

Learner B: So you mean the truck fell down, rolling to the ditch beside the highway?

Learner A: Yes, you are right. Then our driver yanked our car to the side of the road, and scrambled down the slope.

Learner B: But what do you mean by “yank”, do you mean break the car suddenly?

Learner A: Yes, break the car hard.

In this conversation, learner B simultaneously applied strategies in item 24 “I guess the meaning of unfamiliar words” and item 45 “I ask others to speak slowly or repeat when I don’t understand” to help him to understand his partner’s English expressions. Another audiotaped task performance also demonstrated students’ application of some interrelated strategies to solve problems.

Learner A: So what was your feeling after you got out?

Learner B: I swear that will be the last time for me to be in a haunted house. Er..., “will be” or “would be”?

Learner A: “Would”, you are talking about the past.

Learner B: Right, I was totally scared. Er..., how to say, I remember a phrase using the word blood.

Learner A: You mean “my blood run cold”?

Learner B: Yes, yes, my blood run cold. No, the past, my blood ran cold.

In this conversation, learner B found difficulties in expressing his ideas. When he noticed the possible mistakes he made, he respectively applied strategies in item 46 “I ask for correction when I talk”, item 48 “I ask for help from my partner(s)”, and item 31 “I use my mistakes to

help me do better”. The continuous and simultaneous application of the strategies associated with making mistakes facilitated both learner B’s task performance and his language learning.

Moreover, one participant’s interview answer also displayed students’ development of problem-solving abilities in that they could employ different strategies according to the different conditions.

In today’s task, I learned some vocabularies about how to describe a frightening event, some adjectives in particular, such as terrible, horrified, scared, etc. When I tried to firstly acquire these words, I applied the strategy to create a mental picture to distinguish their different extent of horror. When I tried to remember them, however, I used them in different sentences several times. I find it quite useful for me to use different strategies to do different things. (Zhang, interview)

Specifically, Zhang successfully distinguished the different cognitive requirements of different learning goals, such as “to acquire words” and “to remember words”, and he applied strategies in item 4 and 10 respectively to facilitate his learning.

6.3.2. Problem of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students’

LLS: Diversity in the Students’ LLS Usage across Proficiency Level

After the implementation of TBLT in Cycle 3, one problem was still observed from the participants’ interview answers.

I completed the two tasks in the strategy training classes with different partners. In the first task, my partner was more proficient in English than me, while in the second task,

my partner was less proficient. I noticed that there was a great diversity between what categories of strategies we three preferred to use. I'm sure after the strategy training in the two classes, all of us three improved our LLS usage, but what I preferred to use still remained the cognitive and compensatory strategies. And I was also surprised that my partner in the first task preferred to use social and metacognitive strategies, while my partner in the second task used memory and cognitive strategies more than others. (Gao, interview)

Noticing this condition after this participant's interview answer, the researcher designed an interview question to all the 10 focused students, "Do you find any diversity in your LLS usage with your partners with different proficiency level compared with you?" Since their group partners were freely chosen by participants themselves, not all the participants reported a significant difference in their proficiency levels. In the overall 20 groups for the 10 focused participants, based on the participants' reflection and self-evaluation, as well as the general analysis of the mid-term examination scores of all the 10 participants and their partners, 16 groups were evaluated with a significant diversity between the partners' language proficiency levels.

Then the participants' answers the interview question, and their audiotaped task performance found the same tendency as what the above-mentioned participant, Gao, once described: there was a clear diversity between students' LLS usage across proficiency levels. The students who were more proficient in English tended to use metacognitive and social strategies more, whereas their less proficient classmates applied more memory and cognitive strategies. This finding corresponds some previous studies (Gholami et al., 2014; Green and Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003) that indicate the influence of learners' language proficiency on their choice of LLS.

The diverse option of students in terms of what categories of LLS to apply in their language learning was indeed not a problem. In pursuit of learners' better language acquisition and more considerable benefits of TBLT on Chinese students' learning, however, the researcher further adjusted the TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 3. Since the application of LLS was evidently imperative to students' language learning, students should be encouraged and instructed to apply the strategies they did not prefer.

6.3.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 3 to Develop the Students' LLS: Group Composition of the Students across Proficiency Levels

At the end of Cycle 3, considering the clear diversity in participants' LLS usage due to their different language proficiency levels, one adjustment of TBLT practices was proposed: group composition across proficiency levels. Specifically, students were asked to form a pair or group together with their classmates at the different proficiency levels. For the convenience and operability in the genuine classroom settings, this group composition could be pre-arranged by the teacher before the classes.

The benefits of this adjustment were self-evident. From the perspectives of the lower proficient students, they could get access to the practical application of more strategies, since most previous studies already (Gholami et al., 2014; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Zarei & Baharestani, 2014) indicated that students with higher proficiency level used strategies more frequently. From the perspectives of the higher proficient students, they could also obtain the positive influence from their lower proficient classmates in that they could pay more attention to those strategies they ignored in their own learning process. In summary, the different categories applied frequently by the students at distinct proficiency levels, would benefit both learners at higher and lower proficiency levels to pay more attention to their

overall LLS usage. This adjustment was aligned with previous researchers' proposals that obvious proficiency difference between the students could cause their more successful task completion (Storch, 2001; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Yule & Macdonald, 1990).

6.4. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' WTC

6.4.1. Benefits of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students' WTC: The Students' Raised Confidence to Communicate

The quantitative data collected from the WTC questionnaires confirmed the positive effect of the adjusted TBLT practices on students' WTC in Cycle 3. Although the t-test results showed no significant difference between participants' WTC after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 ($p>0.05$), there was indeed an increase in participants' WTC. Specifically, after Cycle 2, due to the implementation of the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2, the mean value for participants' WTC increased to 4.57. After further revising TBLT practices in Cycle 3, participants' WTC continued to grow to 4.72. This slight increase of participants' WTC proved the students' gradual development in their engagement into the tasks.

Table 6.10 Differences in students' WTC after Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

Cycle 2	Cycle 3		
n=122	n=122	T	P
M(SD)	M(SD)		

4.57 (0.61)

4. 72(0.58)

2.36

.08

Besides, the qualitative data provided more clear evidence to confirm the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3 to enhance the students' WTC.

To reduce the students' lopsided emphasis on language forms in Cycle 2, the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 3 added the teacher's feedback to students' preparation into the pre-task stage, this aimed to guide the students to pay equal attention to both the language forms and language meanings. Three focused participants' interview answers after Cycle 3 disclosed their raised confidence to communicate after Cycle 3.

I noticed that our teacher guided us to emphasise the contents in our language usage in our pre-task preparation. It's understandable, and quite useful to our task performance. I made a clear guideline for my speech by integrating the contents together into my speech. So I felt rather smooth when giving my monologue to my partner. This helped me to be more confident to better express my ideas and better control my language. Supported by our teacher, I felt rather relaxed to complete the task. (Sun, interview)

I appreciate our teacher's guidance in our pre-task preparation stage. Because with our teacher's assistance in our preparation, I felt we were making joint effort to complete the task as a whole. In addition to my partner, I also had our teacher to rely on. This made me rather energetic and inspired to communicate in English. (Yang, interview)

When I was discussing with my partner about what we could say in our following tasks, our teacher praised my contribution. I felt rather confident to take part in the tasks more actively. (Zhao, interview)

The participants' responses to the teacher's feedback in Cycle 3 displayed three influential factors to enhance their WTC: teacher's efficient support, teacher's respect for the students' effort, as well as a relaxing, friendly and cohesive interactional environment. All these positive contextual variables in the adjusted TBLT practices assisted students to become more confident in their communication in TBLT, thus enhancing their WTC. Findings about these positive factors are also compatible with the related previous studies that investigate the influence of teachers and interactional context on WTC, as mentioned in the literature review chapter.

In addition, the students' increased WTC in Cycle 3, could also be attributed to the feature of TBLT as being student-centred. Since the teacher-centred teaching method demotivated Chinese students' WTC in their language learning (Peng, 2007; Wen & Clement, 2003), the equality between the teacher and students in the adjusted TBLT practices, encouraged Chinese students to be more willing and more engaged to participate into the communicative tasks. The following participant's response showed their perception about the change of the teacher's role from the teacher-centred teaching to the student-centred TBLT.

Although still keeping the authority in our English learning, our teacher is no longer far away from us. She no longer stands on the platform, but now is among us, supporting us as our team member. (Wang, interview)

Specifically, Wang recognised the teacher's changed roles in the adjusted TBLT, from the dominator of the whole class to the supporting "team member" to facilitate the students' task performance and language learning. This helped the students enhance their WTC in the more relaxing and supportive atmosphere.

6.4.2. Problem of the Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 2 to Develop the Students'

WTC: The Less Proficient Students' Failure in Communication

The only challenge that the students faced in Cycle 3 involved the less proficient students, who failed to communicate freely in their task performance. The failure in communication was not the case for all the participants. The comparison between the 122 students' English scores in their College Entrance Examinations and their scores in the College English Test Band 4 helped the researcher to generally categorise them into high, medium and low proficiency levels. According to their distinct language proficiency levels, the pairs in the entire class could be categorised into six types: two high proficient students (H+H), one high proficient student and one medium proficient student (H+M), one high proficient student and one low proficient student (H+L), two medium proficient students (M+M), one medium proficient student and one low proficient student (M+L), and two low proficient students (L+L). The analysis of the participants' audiotaped task performance showed that only the students in L+L type of pairs had difficulties in communicating, whereas the students in other pairs demonstrated higher WTC and success in their communication.

The researcher thus further analysed the students' failure in communication generated by their participatory structures. The less proficient students' failure was typically explained by the following participant's responses.

I was the note-taker in the first step of our task today. I found that what I wanted to express was already talked by my partner in her speech. So I had nothing new to say when I was the reporter. (Zhao, interview)

Because we are not good at English, we couldn't express freely about what we thought. We didn't in fact prepare enough before our speech, time was limited. (Cui, interview)

The lower proficient students' failure to communicate was generated by a variety of factors. Initially, their lower perceived language competence generated their lowered confidence to continue their communication by proposing some new ideas. This gave rise to their failure to freely express their already established ideas. Zhao suffered this problems in his interaction with his partner. Furthermore, the students' limited language proficiency also constrained their time to make sufficient preparation for the communicative tasks. This affected their success in their communication. Cui and his partner found their challenges in their communication because of this time constraint. The results in the current study are similar to other studies (Eddy-U, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002) in that the students' perceived language competence indeed influenced their WTC. This problem in communication for the lower proficient learners thus inspired the further adjustment of TBLT practices in the next stage of the design-based research.

The language learners' less proficient level is indeed commonly recognised as a negative factor in all the other EFL settings. The issue regarding the students' language proficiency aroused the researcher's attention because of the interplay between the Chinese sociocultural context and the students' language proficiency. Specifically, the teacher-centred teaching method in China, integrated with some students' limited language proficiency, reduced their

WTC in their task performance. This interplay was evident in the following participants' responses.

In our English classes, what we are used to is our teacher's presentation. We don't have many chances to use English by ourselves. So when we need to communicate with each other, especially with my partner whose English is also poor, we cannot express freely. (Sun, interview)

I know my English is poor, but I can improve because I'll try my best to follow my teacher. But in the task today, my partner and I had no assistance and guidance from our teacher. This frustrated us a lot. (Zhao, interview)

Specifically, Sun and Zhao both recognised the influence of the teacher-centred teaching method on their communication in TBLT. Sun elaborated the lack for the students' opportunities to "use English" in their traditional English classes. This demotivated the students, especially the ones with less language proficiency, to communicate in English. Moreover, Zhao's feedback also disclosed his dependency on the teacher's guidance. Therefore, the teacher-centred teaching method in China deprived the students of their opportunities to enhance their language proficiency through communication. For the students with limited language proficiency, this caused the vicious circle that impeded their language development.

6.4.3. The Adjusted TBLT Developed in Cycle 3 to Develop the Students' WTC: The Students' Pair Composition across Proficiency Levels

To promote the less proficient students' communication in their task performance, the researcher instructed all the students' pair composition across proficiency levels. This

practice was simultaneously applied to resolve the problem in the students' development of LLS, so the details was explained in the subsection 6.3.3.

After composing the pairs at the pre-task stage, the students' task performance at the task cycle stage was also guided in an established sequence. The less proficient students in pairs completed the monologue task as the reporter firstly, allowing them to freely express their ideas with less anxiety and more opportunities. Then the more proficient students in pairs took the turn to talk as the reporter. This adjustment of TBLT corresponded previous researchers' proposals about the influence of task type and learners' language proficiency on learners' task performance. Specifically, the monologic task required the students to pay more attention to their meaning expression (Gan, 2013), so the students with lower language proficiency can be motivated with higher WTC to initially perform the task.

6.5. Conclusion

As the last cycle in this design-based study, Cycle 3 examined the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2, then further explored what sociocultural factors impeded Chinese students' language learning in TBLT, and finally proposed new adjustments to resolve these problems. Therefore, following the structure of the conclusion section in Chapter 5, this section will summarise these findings in terms of the four learning aspects.

6.5.1. The Adjusted TBLT to Teach Grammar

The three major adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2 were implemented to teach the students grammar in Cycle 3. The corresponding relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits are shown in the following table.

Table 6.11 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to teach grammar

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 3
Communicating about grammar	The students' acquisition of implicit knowledge
Teacher's participation in the task	The students' achievement in self learning
Training of students' corrective feedback	The students' effective group discussion

Specifically, the students acquired more implicit knowledge because TBLT in Cycle 3 integrated the focus on forms and focus on meanings (Doughty and Williams 1998; Long 2000) and guided the students practice grammatical knowledge in their authentic language usage (Willis, 1996). Furthermore, the students' achievement in self learning evidenced that teacher's participation supplemented the purely students-centred TBLT to better suit the Chinese context. Moreover, the students' effective group discussion evidenced the benefits of corrective feedback to enhance learners' interaction (Robinson, 2011).

In Cycle 3, however, some students required the teacher to provide some related grammatical input to facilitate their grammar learning. This challenge in Chinese students' grammar learning showed that the traditional teacher-centred teaching method in China allowed the students a "gap" in their comprehension of the target grammar and the related grammar, and thus impede the students to explore further in their grammar learning. In order to resolve this

problem and to adapt TBLT in a culturally appropriate manner, the researcher added the fundamental grammatical input in the adjusted TBLT at the end of Cycle 3. This adjustment practiced the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) about the significance of fundamental linguistic input on students' grammar learning. Furthermore, this practice also localised TBLT into TSLT (Carless, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Li et al., 2016) that allowed teachers to introduce language forms in traditional instruction, and aimed to facilitate Chinese students' grammar learning in a manner that they were more accustomed to.

6.5.2. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' Learner Autonomy

In order to enhance the students' learner autonomy, Cycle 3 implemented the two major adjusted TBLT practices to combine learner autonomy and teacher instruction and to assign clear division of labour inside the students' groups. The corresponding relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits are shown in the following table.

Table 6.12 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to develop the students' learner autonomy

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 3
Learner autonomy plus teacher instruction	The students' immediate rewards of self-learning
Clear division of labour inside groups	The students' sense of responsibility

The students' immediate rewards in their autonomous learning shows that specific learning goals (Zou, 2011) and efficient interaction between the teachers and students (Yang & Fang, 2008) can facilitate the students' development of learner autonomy. Furthermore, the students' raised sense of responsibility evidenced the positive impact of the clear division of labour of group work. This finding is compatible with the previous studies that show students' development in group-based task completion (Storch, 2008) and with appropriate interactive roles (Yule & Macdonald, 1990).

Some students, however, still expressed their limited development in learner autonomy because they felt TBLT failed to meet the requirement of examinations. This confirmed the influence of grammar-based examination on Chinese students' language learning approach (Carless, 2015; Chen & Wright, 2017). Therefore, the researcher designed task-based examination preparation at the end of Cycle 3 to address the students' requirement. This adjustment aimed to pursue a TBLT approach that suited the specific institutional context in China, and to enhance Chinese students' learner autonomy when learning in TBLT.

6.5.3. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' LLS

The researcher implemented the adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2 to develop the students' LLS usage. The two major adjustments developed in Cycle 2 resulted in the students' development in their LLS application. Table 6.12 displays these benefits.

Table 6.13 Relationships between the TBLT practices and their benefits to develop the students' LLS

Adjusted TBLT practices developed in Cycle 2	Benefits of these practices in Cycle 3

	The students' awareness of the limited used strategies
Strategy training in TBLT	
The students' reflective journal about LLS usage	The students' development of problem-solving abilities

These benefits once again supported the previous studies that proposed the benefits of strategy training (Chou, 2017; Field, 2008; Li & Qin, 2006; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) to develop the students' LLS usage. The positive impact of reflective journal evidenced that efficient teacher instruction (Field, 2008) and students' own reflection on usage of LLS also improve their confidence and raise their awareness.

Simultaneously, Cycle 3 further figured out that the less proficient students met difficulties in their usage of LLS. Because data analysis in this cycle showed the diversity in students' LLS usage across language proficiency levels, the researcher required the students to compose groups across proficiency levels. This adjustment of TBLT corresponds with some previous studies (Gholami et al., 2014; Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Zarei & Baharestani, 2014) in that students with higher proficiency level used strategies more frequently, the less proficient students thus could learn from their more proficient partners. Furthermore, this adjustment is also in line with previous researchers' proposals that students will complete tasks more successfully when learning with partners at different proficiency levels (Storch, 2001; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Yule & Macdonald, 1990).

6.5.4. The Adjusted TBLT to Develop the Students' WTC

Cycle 3 implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2 to develop the students' WTC. The only one new adjustment of TBLT in Cycle 2 added the teacher's feedback to the students' preparation in the pre-task stage. This adjustment suited Chinese students' emphasis of teachers' authority (Hu, 2002) and thus provided a balance between the teacher-centred traditional Chinese teaching and the learner-centred TBLT. Data analysis in Cycle 3 revealed most participants' raised confidence to communicate in their tasks. Findings in this domain also correspond the previous studies that confirmed the positive impact of teacher's respect and support on students' WTC development (Kang, 2005; Peng, 2007; Wen & Clement, 2003; Zarrinabadi, 2014).

After investigating the benefits of the adjusted TBLT practices, Cycle 3 further figured out one challenge that impeded Chinese students' development in WTC: less proficient students failed to communicate, especially for the two low proficient students in the L+L pairs. The researcher attributed this problem to the Chinese context that students had limited opportunities to communicate in English (Yu & Wang, 2009), and designed pair composition across proficiency levels in TBLT at the end of Cycle 3. This adjustment aimed to motivate the less proficient students to learn from their more proficient partners and thus to gain more willingness to communicate in their future interaction.

In conclusion, Cycle 3 further implemented the adjusted TBLT practices designed in Cycle 2. As the last cycle in this design-based study, it is difficult for Cycle 3 to perfectly complete the innovation and adaptation of TBLT practices in China. The researcher, however, contrived to resolve all the problems observed in the three cycles to maximise the benefits of TBLT on Chinese students' learning. Because the research validity can only be guaranteed if numerous iterations are executed (Hakkarainen, 2009; McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Plomp, 2013; Pool & Laubscher, 2016; Van den Akker, 2007), future empirical studies are needed to further investigate the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. The last two chapters in this study, therefore, will focus on the discussion and conclusion of the contributions and

implications of the three cycles, and aim to propose theoretical and practical suggestions to future researchers.

Chapter 7 Discussion

This study set out to adjust TBLT practices in a culturally appropriate way in order to develop Chinese students' English learning. Underpinned by the conceptual framework and guided by design-based research as described and discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, TBLT practices were adjusted to resolve the challenges caused by sociocultural contexts in China so that TBLT could work in local classrooms and exert a positive impact on students' learning. This study focused on investigating students' learning gains in four learning aspects, namely, grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategies (LLS), and willingness to communicate (WTC). Findings obtained from this design-based study answered both research questions. More specifically, the benefits that the students achieved when implementing the adjusted TBLT practices answered the first research question regarding whether TBLT facilitated Chinese students' English learning success. Furthermore, the two intervention cycles revealed new problems with the integration of TBLT practices due to the impact of sociocultural factors in Chinese classrooms. These issues were related to Research Question 2.1, which concerned the influence of Chinese sociocultural contexts on the students' task performance. Finally, the adjustments to TBLT practices, developed in Cycle 1 and at the end of both Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, answered Research Question 2.2, which focused on TBLT practices that would be culturally appropriate for the Chinese context. Table 7.1 below provides a summary of findings from the three cycles in terms of responses to the research questions.

Table 7.1 Relationship between the research questions and the findings

Research questions	Findings
RQ1. How does TBLT impact Chinese university students' English learning (i.e., educational perceptions, English	Benefits of the

proficiency, learning strategies)?	adjusted TBLT
RQ2.1. What are the social and cultural factors in English classes within Chinese universities that influence the implementation of TBLT?	Problems of the adjusted TBLT
RQ2.2. How can TBLT practices be adjusted to better suit the sociocultural context of English classes in Chinese universities?	Adjusted TBLT practices

In order to elaborate how findings from this design-based study responded to and extended previous research and how they contributed to educational innovations in China, this chapter will discuss findings of the three cycles in terms of how they responded to the three research sub-questions.

7.1. The Impact of TBLT on Chinese Students' Learning

Findings of this design-based study suggest that the adjusted TBLT practices enhanced Chinese students' English learning in various aspects. Specifically, underpinned by the conceptual framework constructed in Chapter 3 based on the four learning aspects that have been the focus of this study, Chapters 5 and 6 revealed the impacts of TBLT on Chinese students' development in grammar learning, learner autonomy, LLS, and WTC. Because a genetic approach guided the data analysis in this study, data in the three genetic domains all contributed to answering the first research question, as described in the data analysis section in Chapter 4. Therefore, the discussion section for Research Question 1 will focus on the

reasons why the adjusted TBLT practices benefited Chinese students' learning, as determined by the genetic analysis.

7.1.1. Interactions between the Adjusted TBLT Practices and Students' Ontogenetic Backgrounds

The ontogenetic data revealed that the interactions between the adjusted TBLT practices and students' ontogenetic backgrounds influenced their task performance, as revealed in the following two examples.

Firstly, two focus participants, Chen and Ma, expressed contrasting attitudes towards one TBLT practice in interviews after Cycle 2. Because they both had relatively higher proficiency compared with other focus participants (as shown in Table 4.3), the statement that students with divergent language proficiency levels perform differently in tasks (Leeser, 2004; Storch, 2001; Watanabe & Swain, 2008) thus cannot explain the differences in feedback in this study. The further ontogenetic data regarding their different previous educational backgrounds thus helped explain their different responses. Chen is from a rural area in western China and is deeply accustomed to the teacher-centred and textbook-based teaching methods, whereas Ma comes from a metropolitan city in eastern China where TBLT has been widely introduced to English classrooms. Their different degrees of exposure to TBLT thus influenced their understanding of and willingness to work in TBLT.

Another example of the participants' ontogenetic data shows a similar trend in the interactions between the adjusted TBLT practices and the students' ontogenetic backgrounds. Regarding group-based task performance, in the same Cycle 2 where the students' responses were not influenced by the adjustments to TBLT practices in different cycles, different

students gave different reflections about their performance in group-based work. Specifically, Zhang and Gao reported their perception that they had achieved little development in the group-based tasks. By contrast, Li appreciated the ‘active communication’ among her group members. The three students were all at the middle level of language proficiency, but they had contrasting ontogenetic backgrounds: Zhang and Gao had so little experience with group work that they did not learn efficiently in groups, whereas Li frequently engaged in group discussion in her study of specialised courses of art design.

What deserves further explanation here is why the students’ diverse ontogenetic backgrounds can explain their varying success with task performances in this study. The literature review in Chapter 2 points out factors that show potential to influence students’ learning with TBLT, therefore, when the students were learning in similar tasks in which the task design and task implementation factors could not exert different impacts, it is understandable for the researcher to attribute the participants’ distinct feedback on TBLT rather than to their own factors. In the above-mentioned two examples, however, the students’ language proficiency and their participation in the tasks were also the same; thus, only the investigation of other students’ own conditions could be useful. In this study, therefore, the students’ different backgrounds and previous learning experiences that were revealed in their ontogenetic data helped analyse the reasons for their varied TBLT task performance. These findings thus revealed how the students’ backgrounds and social differences generated their different degrees of openness to TBLT, and this study also accords with the previous findings (Hu, 2003; Li et al., 2012) that have disclosed significant regional differences among teaching practices in China and reflects the sociocultural contexts’ influences on teaching and learning practices (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Pham, 2011).

In conclusion, analysis of these ontogenetic data explained how the adjusted TBLT practices impacted Chinese students' learning in their task performances: TBLT exerts its influence on the students' language learning by interacting with the students' ontogenetic backgrounds. When the students are familiar with TBLT rationales or practices, they tend to hold supportive attitudes towards TBLT and to engage actively in the task performances. Their attitudes and endeavours thus contributed to their development in diverse learning aspects. This finding thus accords with previous studies (Chong et al., 2018; Olivier et al., 2018), which observed that students' attitudes ultimately determined their learning outcomes. Other students, however, may be exposed to insufficient opportunities to learn in task-based classes. Their unfamiliarity with the TBLT rationales and practices thus constrains their development in TBLT, because they might need significant amounts time to change their learning preferences (Mustafa, 2018) and to finally become accustomed to or to accept the task-based teaching approach.

The interactions between the adjusted TBLT practices and the students' ontogenetic backgrounds thus suggest that educators should consider the following when implementing TBLT in Chinese classes. Firstly, teachers should emphasise the diversity of students and then consider their potentially diverse perceptions and responses to the pedagogies (Barnes et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2018). Analysis of students' ontogenetic data would help teachers to acquire a comprehensive and distinguishing understanding of students, and to employ specific adjustments to teaching practices in order to address students' diverse challenges and demands in ways that would assist more students to achieve success in English language learning. Secondly, teachers could provide more opportunities for students to become immersed in pedagogic innovation and reform. Because a pedagogy could not be completely successful in a specific sociocultural context without its actual, practical implementation in the relevant learning context (Compernelle, 2014; Li et al., 2012; Pham & Renshaw, 2015),

educators and researchers should examine the cultural appropriateness of this pedagogy within the specific cultural and learning contexts to pursue more students' acceptance of it and development in it. Finally, during the concrete implementation of one pedagogy, students may be challenged by their own cultural assumptions and sociocultural factors. Thus, further localised adaptation of teaching practices is needed (Carless, 2011; Li et al., 2012) in order to help students acclimate themselves to this pedagogy and achieve more development. This final orientation coincides with the next perspective to be discussed, highlighting the interactions of the adjusted TBLT practices within the Chinese cultural and learning contexts. These suggestions can be simultaneously generalised to inform the implementation of other new and borrowed pedagogical methods in China.

7.1.2. Conformity of the Adjusted TBLT Practices with Chinese Cultural Contexts

The cultural-historical data gathered in this study revealed the impact of the social, cultural, and historical contexts on students' task performance. These findings revealed that when the adjusted TBLT practices conformed to Chinese cultural contexts, they could to a large extent benefit Chinese students' language learning. Below are three examples of the cultural-historical data collected in this study.

The first example involves the conformity of the adjusted TBLT practices with one Chinese cultural factor: the collectivist culture. In the Chinese cultural context, the Confucius collectivist culture requires Chinese people to emphasise the collectivist interest (Hu, 2002). Therefore, when required to complete tasks together with their peers in TBLT activities, most students demonstrated supportive attitudes toward TBLT and engaged more actively to promote their language learning. Specifically, as shown in 5.3.1.3 and 5.4.1.2, TBLT encouraged the students to engage in more group collaborations, this met their cultural

requirement to maintain their team honour. The qualitative data thus revealed the students' more frequent usage of social strategies and enhanced willingness to communicate in group interactions.

Another example demonstrated that TBLT impacted most students' learning in a positive manner when the adjusted TBLT practices accorded with the institutional reality in China. Specifically, the grammar-based examination system in China drives most students to focus on language forms during their English learning. By contrast, the sheer communication-oriented learning goal of TBLT (Carless, 2009) emphasises enhancing students' communicative competence. This mismatch between TBLT and the Chinese cultural and educational contexts caused some students' demotivation in their task performance. For instance, one participant said, 'I will lose my motivation' if what was learned in TBLT was not associated with the focus of national examinations. To address this disjunction between the TBLT rationale and the Chinese educational contexts, the researcher added a focus on language forms by designing tasks of 'communicating grammar' (as in 5.1.3.1). Moreover, the researcher guided the students to engage in task-based examination preparation (as in 6.2.3), this adjustment aimed to help them pursue higher scores on examinations. Most students' offered positive responses to the conformity of the adjusted TBLT practices to the Chinese context, reporting after the three cycles of this study that this promoted their development in language learning.

In conclusion, analysis of these cultural-historical data explained how TBLT practices collaborated with the Chinese contexts when influencing Chinese students' learning. Specifically, when the TBLT practices show disjunctions with the Chinese cultural or institutional contexts, it might be difficult for most Chinese students to accept these teaching practices, and some students can even be demotivated by these disjunctions. By contrast,

when the adjusted TBLT practices accord with the Chinese cultural contexts and address Chinese students' cultural requirements and learning goals, most students might accept and support this teaching approach and engage actively to promote their language learning in TBLT. Therefore, whether or not the adjusted TBLT practices conform with Chinese cultural contexts can determine the extent to which TBLT can positively impact Chinese students' language learning. Findings obtained from the cultural-historical data thus suggest that integration between Chinese contexts and TBLT rationales is a requirement for the localised adaptation of TBLT in China (Ji & Pham, 2018), and these findings guided the practical implication that will be discussed in the subsection 9.2 in details.

7.1.3. Students' Perceptions and Responses to the Adjusted TBLT Practices

In addition to the interactions among the adjusted TBLT practices, the students' ontogenetic backgrounds, and the Chinese socio-cultural-historic context, the microgenetic data obtained from the two intervention cycles also disclosed how the students' perceptions and responses to the adjusted TBLT practices interacted with TBLT. Regarding how TBLT impacted Chinese students' language learning, these microgenetic data suggested that TBLT influenced the students' learning outcomes by influencing their concrete perceptions and activities. Below are two examples.

One interesting finding regarding the participants' development of LLS lies in the fact that the quantitative data and qualitative data showed contrary results. Specifically, one participant expressed his reluctance to apply the strategy his response to LLS questionnaire Item 7: 'I physically act out new words'. In the guided journal, he explained the reason was that this strategy was not 'formal and serious' and was merely 'proper for younger learners'. Quantitative data analysis results in Table 5.10 and Table 6.9, however, showed the opposite

trend. The participants' mean values for usage frequency of this strategy were at levels of 3.0, 3.3, and 3.5, respectively, in the three cycles. According to Oxford's (1990) range description of LLS usage, the students' usage of this strategy was at moderate levels (2.5 to 3.4) or even high level (above 3.5). Although one participant's view cannot represent all or even most Chinese students, the contrast shown in the data still aroused the researcher's attention. This contrast can be primarily explained by Chinese assumptions about learning. Considering learning as a serious process (Hu, 2002), Chinese people tend to learn based on laboured accumulation of knowledge. The strategy in Item 7 to act out words, is thus not encouraged nor even accepted in traditional teaching in China, and this participant therefore showed his refusal to apply this strategy in Cycle 2. The adjusted TBLT practices at the end of Cycle 2, however, trained the participants in how to apply this strategy; thus some participants showed more interest in participating compared with their reactions in the previous cycles. This was the first reason why the quantitative data showed the participants' frequent usage of this strategy. Furthermore, the communicative requirement of pedagogical tasks also urged the participants to apply this strategy in order to facilitate their mutual interaction and understanding. This was evidenced by the students' audiotaped task performance in which they used this strategy. In conclusion, although Chinese traditional culture caused some students' to hold negative perceptions of this strategy, their performance task, to promote communication, required them to apply it, and the adjusted TBLT practices, combined with targeted strategy training, also supported their usage of it. The gradual changes in students' perceptions and the development in their behaviours thus simultaneously occurred in their task performance.

Furthermore, what is interesting is that one result in this study contradicts the finding of a previous study. In Cycle 3, composition assignments paired students across proficiency levels, and they were found to have benefited the participants' WTC, because both the more

proficient and less proficient students in the pairs contributed to their shared task performance and gained confidence. The other study conducted by Watanabe and Swain (2008), however, showed that the less proficient partners in pairs seemed to take the control of the tasks. The divergent results of these two studies can be explained by the participants' previous understanding of the differences in proficiency between themselves and their partners. In Watanabe and Swain's study (2008), the participants did not know their partners' proficiency levels; rather they perceived their language proficiency to be based on the "sharing of ideas" (p. 127) in the interaction. Therefore, Watanabe and Swain's study (2008) found that less proficient participants were misperceived as the more proficient students and dominated the discussion. The participants whose language proficiency was perceived at the higher level contributed more to their pair discussion. This finding is indeed not contradictory to the result of the current study that showed the more proficient students 'provided useful assistance' to their less proficient partners. The two studies thus align in that the participants' perception of their language proficiency influenced their attitudes and performances.

Furthermore, because the participants in this study knew of the proficiency differences between themselves and their partners before their task performance, they had the willingness to contribute in different ways to their team. This might explain why, in this study, both the more proficient and less proficient students contributed much during their task performance, whereas in Watanabe and Swain's study (2008), only the students perceived to be more proficient contributed more. The microgenetic data thus demonstrates the benefit of the division of students' labours in group activities. This adjustment of TBLT practice promoted the students' mutual assistance and active engagement in their group-based task performance.

In conclusion, these two examples of the use microgenetic data revealed the students' concrete perceptions and behaviours in their language learning, and thus showed how TBLT influenced their learning outcomes by gradually changing and influencing their concrete

perceptions and activities. This finding conforms to the findings of previous studies about student efficacy (Chong et al., 2018; Olivier et al., 2018) that show students' attitudes finally determine their learning outcomes, and it suggests the necessity for teachers to consider the students' voices in the actual teaching practices (Barnes et al., 2018).

Regarding the first research question about the impact of TBLT on Chinese students' language learning, the genetic analytical approach contributed to ontogenetic, cultural-historical and microgenetic data to establish a comprehensive lens of the impact, as shown in Figure 7.1.

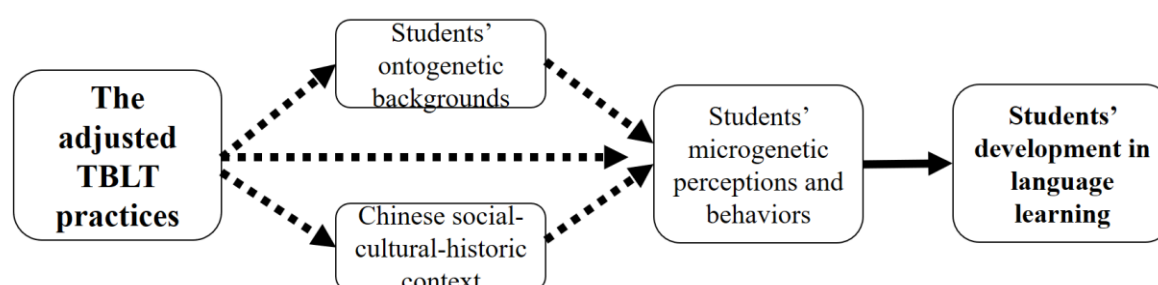


Figure 7.1 The impact of TBLT on Chinese students' learning

Specifically, when the adjusted TBLT practices were familiar to the students in their previous learning experiences and when they conformed to the Chinese social-cultural-historical contexts, the students would hold supportive attitudes towards these teaching practices, or they gradually changed their previously negative perceptions. Thus, their subsequent engagement with the tasks would assist their development in language learning. Therefore, apart from the direct impact on Chinese students' perceptions towards learning and behaviours in classes, the adjusted TBLT practices also interacted with the students' ontogenetic backgrounds as well as the Chinese socio-cultural-historic context to exert indirect influences on Chinese students' learning. Therefore, in order to maximise the

positive impact of TBLT on Chinese students' learning in the Chinese context, the ultimate approach would be the design and implementation of TBLT practices that could lead to students' support and thus motivate them to endeavour in their task performance. In pursuit of these practices, teachers and educators should simultaneously consider the students' diverse backgrounds and address their own requirements and challenges, as well as emphasising the specific Chinese sociocultural realities and adjusting the TBLT practices to suit the Chinese cultural and educational contexts. Because the former aspect of students' backgrounds are still associated with the latter aspect of the sociocultural context they belong to, the next two subsections will discuss the sociocultural context in detail in order to investigate the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China.

7.2. Sociocultural Factors Influencing Student Learning in TBLT

Findings obtained from the two intervention cycles helped answer Research Question 2.1. Firstly, the findings in this study accord well with the findings of many prior studies in the literature that have identified the influence of relevant Chinese sociocultural factors. Furthermore, the two intervention cycles have also revealed a more complicated picture showing that other sociocultural factors disclosed in the previous studies exert both positive and negative influences on Chinese students' learning in TBLT practices. This finding is in part in line with the previous findings that these factors negatively influence students' learning, but it also contradicts previous studies in that these factors also exert a positive influence. Finally, in addition to the factors mentioned in previous studies, findings in the current study also disclose one new sociocultural factor in the Chinese classrooms. This subsection, therefore, will elaborate on the findings from these three angles about how Chinese sociocultural contexts influence students' task performance in TBLT.

7.2.1. Findings Compatible with Previous Studies

In this study, it was not a surprise to discover the influence of particular Chinese sociocultural factors on the students' language learning in TBLT, as previous studies have produced such findings. Table 7.7 below illustrates predominant factors and the learning aspects they influenced in the current study.

Table 7.2 Chinese sociocultural factors and the learning aspects they influenced (findings compatible with the previous studies)

Sociocultural factors	Subsections	Learning aspects
Memorisation-based teaching	5.1.2	Grammar learning
Teacher-centred teaching	5.1.2	Grammar learning
	5.2.2	Learner autonomy
	5.4.2	WTC
Grammar-translation teaching	5.3.2	LLS
	5.4.2	WTC
Chinese assumptions of learning	5.3.2	LLS

Firstly, most Chinese students are accustomed to the traditional memorisation-based teaching methods. They recite and memorise what they learn from the textbooks and from their teacher's presentation and apply memorisation as the major approach to consolidate acquired knowledge (Benson et al., 2003; Hu, 2002; Jiang & Smith, 2009; Snow et al., 2017). This explains why the participants in this study failed to acquire the implicit knowledge when learning grammar in TBLT. They ended their task performance with their memorisation of the explicit knowledge about the grammatical structures, but they failed to further explore the implicit knowledge (Liu & Xu, 2017). The participants' sample work and their interview responses supported this deduction that memorisation-based teaching impedes the students' grammar learning.

Another sociocultural factor in the Chinese classrooms that hinders students' learning in TBLT is the teacher-centred teaching method. Many participants in this study recognised the influence of this factor and showed their dependency upon the teacher's assistance when performing the tasks. When developing grammar knowledge with TBLT, students failed to analyse the grammatical structures without the teacher's explanation. When the researcher encouraged the students to perform the tasks in an autonomous manner, they put an overemphasis on their learner autonomy and set some unrealistic goals far beyond their actual language proficiency levels. When communicating with their peers, some participants were demotivated to use English in their interactions. These problems can be attributed to the influence of the teacher-centred teaching method. The teacher's tutorial-style of instruction dominates the traditional Chinese classrooms (Halstead & Zhu, 2009; Hua, et al., 2011), and the teachers select and interpret what knowledge they regard as useful to the students (Hu, 2002). During this process, the students merely need to absorb the teacher's imparted

knowledge, then understand and practise it. Being accustomed to the teacher's instruction, they lack the skills either to analyse actively (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996) or to establish the realistic or appropriate learning goals (Snow, 2007) in order to communicate in English with efficiency (Carless, 2004). Consequently, the teacher-centred teaching in China hinders the students' learning in TBLT.

Moreover, findings in the current study also provide support to the findings of previous studies that the grammar-translation teaching in China impedes the students' development in TBLT. In grammar-translation teaching, both the teachers and students focus primarily on grammar and language knowledge (Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007). The teachers explain sentences by translating from or to the target language (Carless, 2004), and the students gain the knowledge about the target linguistic forms (words or grammatical rules). The teaching and learning styles in this method are thus form-focused (Chen & Wright, 2017); both the teachers and the students emphasise language forms in the EFL classes. Previous researchers, thus, claim that this traditional Chinese method impedes the students' language learning and development due to their limited skills in authentic language usage (Peng, 2007; Yu & Wang, 2009) as well as the lopsided emphasis on knowledge rather than skills (Gu, 2016; Peng, et al., 2015). Their claim appears very feasible because both the quantitative and qualitative data collected in the intervention cycles in this study shows that: (1) This teaching method limited the participants' LLS usage and development in that they only insisted in the strategies applied in this teaching method but did not take risks to try any other strategies. (2) It also led to the participants' lopsided emphasis on language forms in their communication; thus it caused anxiety in communication and reduced their WTC.

Findings obtained from this study also accord with the previous studies of Chinese assumptions regarding learning. Most Chinese students hold the traditional assumptions of

learning that portray learning as a serious and laboured process (Hu, 2002); therefore, they feel that they should learn a language by digesting and accumulating language knowledge in a laborious manner (Hu, 2002; Rao, 2006). Language learning, tradition argues, should rely heavily on the classical written texts (Carless, 2007) rather than on taking actions such as creating sounds or images or physically acting out new words. They seldom use extraverted learning (Li & Qin, 2006), in which learners employ physical actions and practise language in concrete experiences. The influence of this Chinese assumption of learning on Chinese students' language learning in TBLT was found in their usage of LLS. Specifically, most participants offered a limited and reluctant usage of some strategies that were associated with extraverted learning. One participant asserted in a guided journal response that these strategies were 'proper for younger learners', but he preferred 'more formal and serious methods'.

7.2.2. Findings Contrasting with Previous Studies

In addition to the findings that accord with the previous studies, findings obtained from the current study also show some contradictions with what previous researchers found. Specifically, in terms of how some Chinese sociocultural factors influence the students' task performance and language learning in TBLT, prior researchers found primarily negative influences. For instance, the examination-oriented culture urges Chinese students to focus on what was emphasised in examinations but fails to pursue their comprehensive development (Benson et al., 2003; Halstead & Zhu, 2009). Findings in this study, however, simultaneously found both negative and positive influences of this sociocultural factor. Table 7.8 below displays this sociocultural factor and the learning aspects that it influenced both negatively and positively.

Table 7.3 Examination-oriented teaching and the learning aspects it influenced

Sociocultural factors	Subsections	Learning aspects
Examination-oriented teaching	5.4.2	WTC (negative influence)
	5.1.1	Grammar learning (positive influence)

The influences of examination-oriented teaching in China are evident in the current study. For most Chinese students at all levels of education, the score in the examinations is still the only assessment criterion for their academic performance at school. High scores in examinations prove students' overall capabilities in learning, thus promising students better opportunities to be enrolled into higher levels of education and to acquire better employment. In terms of the teachers, the students' performance in the examinations is also the main evidence for society and parents to affirm their quality of teaching. For these reasons, both the students and the teachers highly value the examinations, and the national examination system directs them to learn and teach what is emphasised in the exams (Benson et al., 2003; Halstead & Zhu, 2009). Most researchers regard this examination-oriented teaching as negative because it deprives the students of opportunities to learn material that is not the focus of the examinations (Huang 2016; Ren, 2011; Yuan 2016).

Findings of the current study provide evidence supporting this concept of the negative influence of examination-oriented teaching. For example, one participant, Yang, responded in an interview that he and his partners merely 'focused on the language knowledge' in the pre-task planning but failed to prepare for content and, thus, 'gradually felt less confident'

communicating in English. This is primarily the result of the examination-oriented culture in China (Huang, 2016; Yuan, 2016), which tends to emphasise acquiring knowledge of language forms for English examinations.

By analysing the participants' responses in this study, however, the researcher also discovered positive influences of examination-oriented teaching on students' development in TBLT. In Cycle 2, one participant, Zhao, reported in the guided journal that, 'I think learning grammar is really important, because it is emphasised in our examinations'. This suggested that examination-oriented teaching motivated the students' language learning, and this particular student could see the importance of grammar in both a TBLT and exam context.

In summary, the examination-oriented teaching in China influences the students' learning with TBLT both negatively and positively. On one hand, the students' strong desire to pass the examinations motivates them to seek every opportunity to enhance their English learning. Simultaneously, however, some students merely focus on the language forms that are assessed in the examinations. This constrains their comprehensive development because they fail to learn material and skills that are not emphasised in the examinations. The double-faced influence of examination-oriented teaching thus has two major implications for both teachers and examination designers. For the teachers, it is important that they instruct students to pursue comprehensive language development to both pass the examinations and to cultivate their language abilities and learning skills. For the examination designers, they should consider how to balance the assessment of knowledge and ability in the examinations. For the English examinations, in particular, they should encompass both mastery of the linguistic forms and communicative competence as the assessment goals.

7.2.3. New Findings

In addition to the factors mentioned in the previous studies, as discussed in the previous two subsections, findings in the current study also explored an area that has not been discussed in previous studies: the collectivist culture in China as an influential factor on Chinese learners in TBLT classrooms. In the Chinese context, the Confucian collectivist culture requires Chinese people to emphasise the collectivist interest (Hu, 2002). It insists that one's development should be compatible with the thriving of the group to which he or she belongs. Because the majority of the pedagogical tasks were designed as group-based work, the collectivist culture exerts apparent influences in the current study.

Table 7.4 The collectivist culture and the learning aspects it influenced

Sociocultural factors	Subsections	Learning aspects
Collectivist culture	5.2.2	Learner autonomy (negative influence)
	5.3.1	LLS (positive influence)
	5.4.1	WTC (positive influence)

As shown in Table 7.9, the collectivist culture in China was also shown to exert both positive and negative influences on students' language learning in the current study. In terms of the students' development of learner autonomy, as shown in 5.2.2.2, the collectivist culture impeded the students' automatic pursuit of language learning and self-expression, thus impeding their learner autonomy. A collectivist culture deprived the students of opportunities

to further explore their own language learning after their completion of the group work, and it impeded their freedom of self-expression and even dependent thinking. The participants' responses such as 'we don't need to further analyse the language knowledge occurring in our task performance' and 'if we focus more on expressing our own ideas, especially those ideas contrary to my partner's, our team will not function as a whole' provide evidence for these findings. This study thus suggests that the collectivist culture impedes Chinese students' learning because they tend to abandon their individual achievements and personal needs during their pursuit of the collectivist victory in task performance.

By contrast, the collectivist culture promoted the students' development in other aspects. Specifically, in terms of the students' LLS usage and development, as shown in 5.3.1.3, the collectivist culture encouraged Chinese students to use more social strategies to promote their success in group interaction. One participant, Gao, asserted in her interview responses that, 'Because we are a team, what we achieved as a team will be the honour for both of us'. This helped her develop her usage of social strategies to contribute to the group interaction in the tasks. Furthermore, in terms of the students' development of WTC, as shown in 5.4.1.2, the collectivist culture also helped to increase the students' WTC because it encouraged them to engage more in communication to maintain the team's honour. The participants' interview responses, such as 'it's not just my own business, it's also related to my partner' explains how the collectivist culture enhanced the students' WTC.

In summary, the collectivist culture can be regarded as a double-edged sword. The students' pursuit of collectivist achievement in their group-based task performance enhances their engagement with the tasks and develops their usage of some strategies to facilitate the group work. However, the collectivist culture also constrains the students' autonomous learning after their completion of the group work and limits their free expression to avoid conflicts

inside the groups. Therefore, in order to maximise the positive influences of collectivist culture and to avoid its negative influences on Chinese students' English learning, the teacher could conduct appropriate instruction to the students. Firstly, there should be a balance between individual development and group achievement during the group-based task performance. To complete the group work at the expense of individual achievement is a narrow and segmented view of collectivist culture. The true collectivist achievement should also encompass the development of every group members' development. Secondly, the true contribution to the group can be multifaceted. To engage actively into the group discussions can certainly be vital to the group's achievement, as the participants experienced in the current study. Apart from this, the teacher can guide the students to further investigate how their different voices can contribute to others' thinking and learning. Expressing some diverse, or even adverse, opinions in the group discussion can also contribute to other group members by inspiring some further achievement.

7.3. Socio-culturally Appropriate TBLT Practices in the Chinese Context

TBLT practices were adjusted in the three cycles to suit the sociocultural context of Chinese classrooms. Based on the literature review perspectives regarding how the Chinese sociocultural context contradicts the teaching rationales of TBLT, the three cycles adjusted TBLT mainly in two aspects: (1) TBLT practices were revised to become more socio-culturally appropriate methods in the Chinese cultural context, and (2) The Chinese traditional teaching methods and the TBLT rationales were blended into hybrid teaching practices.

These two diverse ways to adjust TBLT practices both aim to pursue the culturally appropriate TBLT practices that can enhance Chinese students' language learning in the Chinese context. Although the Western-based TBLT has been proved popular within Western

educational systems, there are indeed various mismatches between its teaching rationales and the Chinese sociocultural context. It is impossible to make changes in many sociocultural factors, for example, some cultural values, structural conditions, and teaching and learning resources. Therefore, TBLT practices need to be modified to suit these hard-to-change factors and conditions. In Figure 7.2 below, the dashed line with two arrows at both ends in the middle the figure illustrates this aim underpinning the research. Simultaneously, the arrows represent the mismatches between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales as well as their possible combinations in adjusted TBLT practices.

The two ways to adjust TBLT practices, however, grew out of different aspects of mismatches between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales. Firstly, particular Chinese sociocultural factors lead to Chinese students' difficulties with their task performance when TBLT practices are implemented. The teaching rationales of TBLT, by contrast, prove to benefit the students' learning. The researcher, therefore, regarded these beneficial TBLT rationales as the starting points to adjust TBLT practices. Adjusted TBLT practices developed in the three cycles thus helped solve the problems caused by the Chinese educational and cultural contexts, and they suit the Chinese context to establish the socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices. The upper part of Figure 7.2 illustrates this method of adjustment. Secondly, the Chinese context also determines particular traditional teaching methods that benefit Chinese students' learning. These teaching methods, however, still reveal contradictions with the TBLT teaching rationales. Because these TBLT rationales have received criticism from researchers in this field (as shown in detail in the discussion below), the current study thus adjusted TBLT practices by emphasising the beneficial traditional teaching methods in China. The blending of traditional Chinese teaching practices and TBLT rationales thus assisted the researcher to maximise the benefits of TBLT practices. The bottom section of Figure 7.2 thus displays this method to adjust TBLT practices.

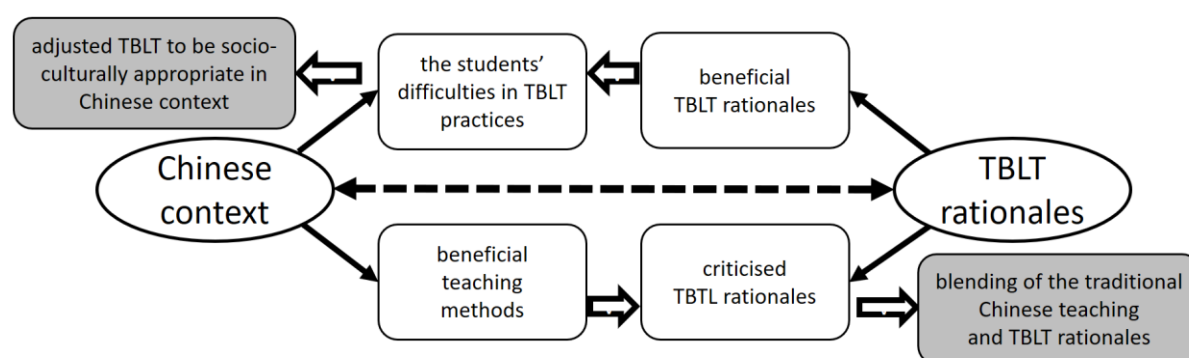
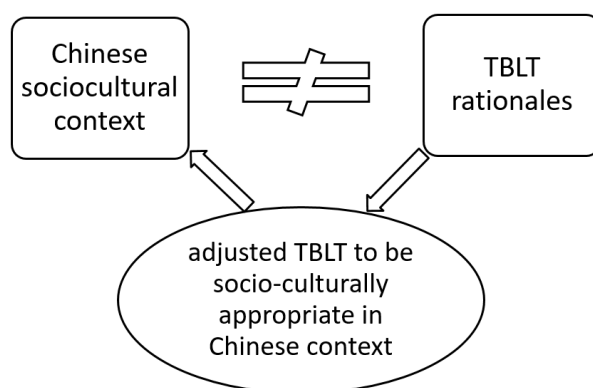


Figure 7.2 Two methods to adjust the socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context

7.3.1. Adjusting TBLT to be Socio-culturally Appropriate in the Chinese Context

Because Chinese sociocultural context influences the students' actual learning process (Butler, 2011; Lantolf, 2006; Littlewood, 2007; Pham & Renshaw, 2014), only the adjusted TBLT practices that suit the Chinese context can truly facilitate Chinese students' learning in TBLT (Lantolf, 2006; Pham & Renshaw, 2014). Based on the literature review and the data analysis that revealed disjunctions between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales (e.g., Carless, 2004; Huang, 2013; Zheng & Borg, 2014), the three cycles in this design-based research modified the pedagogical practices of TBLT in order to pursue culturally appropriate methods of TBLT. Figure 7.3 below thus illustrates the fundamental framework detailing how this study adjusted TBLT practices to be socio-culturally appropriate in the Chinese context. The adjusted TBLT practices simultaneously maintained the teaching rationales of TBLT and suited the Chinese sociocultural context. Therefore, these adjustments addressed the mismatches between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales and modified socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context. These adjustments, as discussed in the next subsections, aimed to resolve the problems that the students faced in two areas in their TBLT task performance.



7.3.1.1. Adjusting TBLT Practices to Benefit the Students at Lower Proficiency Levels

Due to the linguistic and social realities in China, Chinese students have limited opportunities for interactions involving English-language practice outside, and even inside, English classes (Yu & Wang, 2009). TBLT, however, requires that students engage in the communicative tasks to enhance their communicative competence (Littlewood, 2004; 2007; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). During the task cycle stage, students' ideal performance would be fully communicative language outcomes. This causes the disjunction between the Chinese context and TBLT rationale. Researchers (e.g., Huang, 2016; Seedhouse, 1999; Yan, 2015) claim that students whose language proficiency levels are not high enough are often left behind, and so cannot benefit much from TBLT.

Data collected from the current study offered evidence supporting this argument. For instance, some participants said in interviews that they 'could not express freely about what they thought' and felt 'frustrated.' Audiotapes of some students' task performance also showed long gaps in their verbal speeches, or complete repetition of their previous ideas. What deserves particular notice here is that these problems in communication did not occur with all the participants in the current study. Because the ten focus participants were chosen to represent the diversity in students' language proficiency, as clarified in Chapter 4, and only three participants were at the lower language proficiency level. The data analysis revealed that only these three focus participants, and other participants who were also less proficient, faced these obstacles in terms of their English expression.

In order to maximise the benefits of TBLT to the students of lower proficiency levels, the researcher adjusted TBLT practices based on the problems they met in the previous cycles.

Firstly, clear divisions of labour inside groups were established in the students' task performance. The researcher required the students to assign different responsibilities to every group member, where they played the roles of team leader, recorder, language supporter, icebreaker, and idea contributor. This adjustment aimed to help all the students, the less proficient ones in particular, to identify their own positions, and to boost their autonomous participation and collaboration. Secondly, when performing tasks in pair-based discussions, the students were instructed to compose pairs across proficiency levels. Their task performance was also guided in an established sequence where the less proficient students initially completed the monologue tasks to express with less anxiety and more opportunities. This adjustment allowed the less proficient students to gain confidence in their own language usage and to develop their English by learning from their more proficient peers.

In conclusion, as shown in the Figure 7.4, the limited interaction opportunities in China cause difficulties for the less proficient students during their task performance in TBLT. The researcher thus assigned clear divisions of labour in the students' groups and guided them to compose pairs across the language proficiency levels. These two adjustments simultaneously suited the Chinese collectivist culture (Hu, 2002) to enhance the students' contributions to their entire group (or pair), and persisted the TBLT rationale of learning language in communication. Therefore, these two adjusted TBLT practices helped to address the problems caused by the Chinese context and to benefit Chinese students of lower proficiency level.

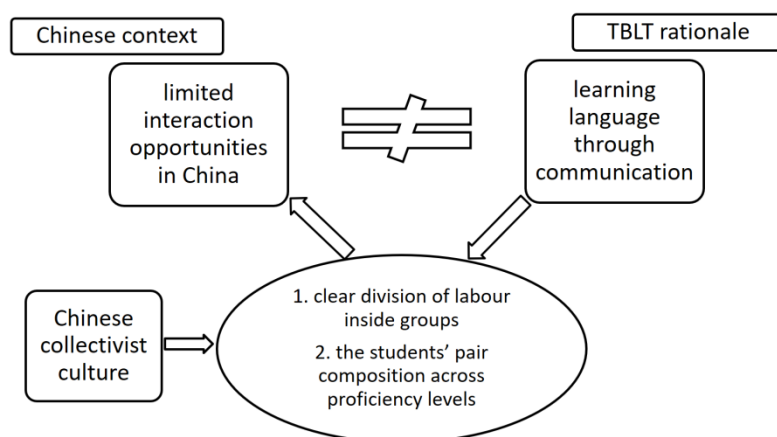


Figure 7.4 Adjusted TBLT practices to benefit the students of lower proficiency levels

7.3.1.2. Adjusting TBLT Practices to Enhance the Students' Group Work

The teacher-centred and textbook-based teaching in China does not leave many opportunities for Chinese students to learn in groups (Carless, 2007; Gong & Holliday, 2013; Rao, 2006). Previous studies have reported that when communicating with peers and working in groups, some Chinese students tend to feel timid about sharing their ideas, or may have difficulty promoting interaction (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zheng & Gao, 2017). The results of the present study are in line with these findings. Specifically, some participants expressed their reluctance to engage in group work when they said 'it's a waste of time' and 'most of us cannot give each other beneficial help'. Before the researcher implemented adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2, the students also expressed their negative perceptions towards group work's influence on grammar learning ($M=2.73$) and on collaborative abilities ($M=2.81$).

By contrast, the students' development in group-based tasks is one of the teaching rationales of TBLT. Researchers have demonstrated the benefits of group-based tasks in that they improve the students' cooperative learning abilities (e.g., Gilabert, Barón & Llanes, 2009)

and enhance their language mastery (e.g., Kim, 2011; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Révész, 2011; Sasayama, 2016; Gilabert & Barón, 2013). Chinese students' struggles in group work and the benefits of group-based tasks in TBLT, therefore, inspired the researcher to adjust TBLT practices to suit the Chinese context. This adjustment aimed to facilitate Chinese students' group work in TBLT.

The researcher guided the students in providing peer feedback during their group work in TBLT. In the grammar learning tasks, the researcher instructed the students to provide corrective feedback about the incorrect usage of grammatical structures. The feedback encompassed analysis and evaluation to other students' language usage, and it included suggestions about how to correct the errors to refine the language usage. This aimed to encourage the students to analyse the grammar knowledge and contribute to each other's learning in their group work.

In conclusion, as shown in Figure 7.5, the teacher-centred and textbook-based teaching in China cause difficulties for some Chinese students to participate actively and efficiently in their group work in TBLT. To address the students' struggles in their group-based tasks, the researcher trained them to provide peer feedback during their task performance. Therefore, this adjusted TBLT practice aimed to help to address the problems caused by the Chinese context and to enhance Chinese students' group work.

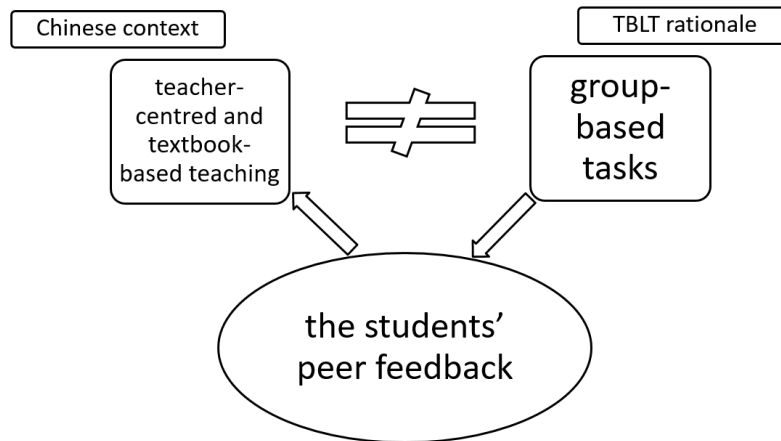


Figure 7.5 Adjusted TBLT practices to enhance the students' group work

7.3.2. Blending Traditional Chinese Teaching and TBLT Rationales

In addition to the adjustments of TBLT practices to address the disjunctions between the Chinese sociocultural context and the TBLT rationales, the present design-based research also adjusted TBLT practices by blending the traditional Chinese teaching methods and TBLT rationales. Figure 7.6 below illustrates the process of this adjustment. Figure 7.6.

Blending Traditional Chinese Teaching and TBLT Rationales

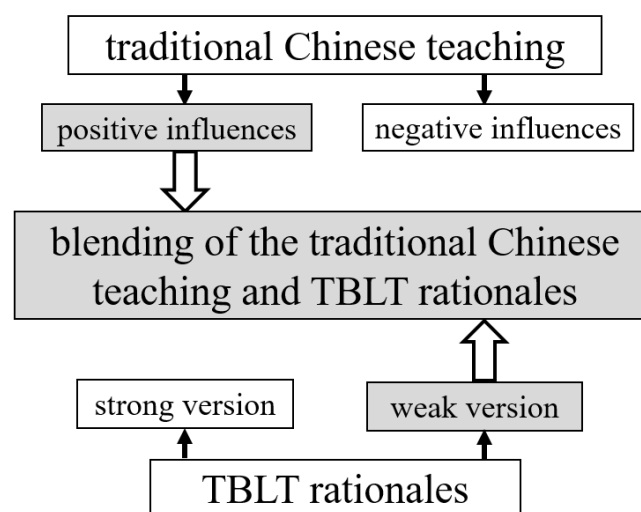


Figure 7.6 Blending of the traditional Chinese teaching and TBLT rationales

As discussed in subsection 7.2, findings in the present study disclose that particular traditional Chinese teaching methods exert both positive and negative influences on Chinese students' learning in TBLT practices. This helps researchers establish a more comprehensive view regarding the influences of the Chinese cultural and educational contexts on the students' learning process. These traditional teaching methods are influenced by the Chinese sociocultural context and thus suit this context (Hu, 2002). Although these traditional teaching methods show disjunctions with TBLT practices, they facilitate Chinese students' learning in particular aspects. Findings in the current study showed these teaching methods' positive influences. Therefore, it is worthwhile for educators to take advantage of these methods when teaching TBLT in the Chinese context. Also, the Chinese sociocultural context is both as dynamic and as diverse as any other contexts (Lantolf, 2000); thus it is important to explore how to apply the positive influences of this context. Because it is impossible to directly implant the Western-based system of TBLT into Chinese classrooms (Butler, 2011; Littlewood, 2007), TBLT practitioners should improve TBLT by applying the relevant sociocultural resources (Tobin, 2007). The upper half of Figure 7.6 thus illustrates how to blend the positive influences of traditional Chinese teaching methods into TBLT practices.

Furthermore, in terms of TBLT itself, as is often the case when a teaching method earns its popularity with its tremendous benefits, criticism can also set in. TBLT contradicts traditional views about language teaching in that it emphasises student-centred learning (Willis, 1996; Carless, 2009; Shang, 2010) and focuses on the students' expression of language meanings in communication (Bygate et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Therefore, the language acquisition during the performance of certain language tasks in TBLT, diverges from the 'systematic attempt to teach the language bit by bit' (Ellis, 2009, 222) as in the traditional language teaching approaches. Researchers have thus proposed criticisms that were discussed

in all the three stages in TBLT (Ellis, 2009; Sheen, 2004; Swain, 2005). The detailed description of the adjusted TBLT practices in the next subsections will elaborate these criticisms. Based on these criticisms, researchers in the field of TBLT further distinguish the strong version and weak version of TBLT (Carless, 2007; Skehan, 1996). The strong version emphasises the authenticity of tasks, namely, it insists that the student-centred, meaning-focused, and communicative tasks. The weak version, by contrast, offers the flexibility of using different kinds of tasks to facilitate the students' language learning. The weak version of TBLT thus blends the TBLT rationales and practices of traditional teaching methods to avoid the disadvantages of the strong version (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, the current study followed the researchers' designs in the weak version of TBLT to blend it into adjusted TBLT practices in the Chinese educational context. The bottom section of Figure 7.6 thus shows how to blend the weak version of TBLT into the adjusted TBLT practices in the Chinese context. These adjustments will be described in detail in the next four subsections.

7.3.2.1. Teachers' Instruction in Student-centred TBLT

The first adjustment of TBLT practices that blends the traditional Chinese teaching methods and the TBLT rationales involves the teacher's role in TBLT. Contrary to the teacher-centred Chinese teaching method, TBLT stresses the students' autonomous learning and active engagement into the pedagogic tasks (Carless, 2007). The teacher is no longer the centre of the entire class, and the students should largely rely on their own language resources to complete the tasks (Ellis, 2009). Even in the first pre-task stage of TBLT, the teacher does not directly impart the language input. Instead, the teacher merely performs as a facilitator or manager to allow the students to acquire the language input by themselves. Swan (2005) thus claims that TBLT promotes learners' participation at the expense of teacher appropriate roles in the language class, which becomes 'an important source of new language'. Without the

teacher's provision of sufficient language input, the students' language learning would not be effective. Findings in the two intervention cycles provide support for this concern about the ineffectiveness of teacher-centred TBLT. Specifically, the participants' expressed their needs for the teacher's instruction when responding to the questionnaire item, "I think I can learn the target knowledge during my own authentic use of English in TBLT" in Cycle 1 (M=2.67). They also stated in their interviews and journal responses that 'I'm used to teacher's guidance in the previous classes', and 'I still need some explanation by the teacher'. Moreover, some participants even provided specific advice by suggesting that the teacher 'bring forward the feedback to our performance in the language focus stage into our task performance stage'.

In order to avoid an inappropriate role for the teacher in TBLT, the researcher blended the teacher's scaffolding and engagement with the student-centred TBLT. Specifically, in the pre-task stage, to assist the students in establishing realistic learning goals, the researcher provided guidance for clear and concrete learning goals. Moreover, in addition to what students would learn during their task performance, the researcher also added the teacher's guidance about how to balance the focus on language forms and language meanings. During the students' self-preparation for their task performance in the pre-task stage, the teacher walked around the classroom to guide the students to pay equal attention to both language forms and meanings. Following the teacher's guidance and feedback, the students had the freedom to plan their own learning goals and learning foci in detail. Furthermore, during the students' task performance, the researcher also participated in the tasks as a facilitator and a partner. To reduce the teacher's direct instruction and increase the students' participation (Ellis, 2003; Robinson, 2001), the researcher merely provided the students with corrective feedback by indicating their incorrect language use (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Figure 7.7 below thus shows how the teacher's instruction in student-centred TBLT blended the

teacher-centred traditional teaching in China and the student-centred teaching rationale of TBLT in the current study.

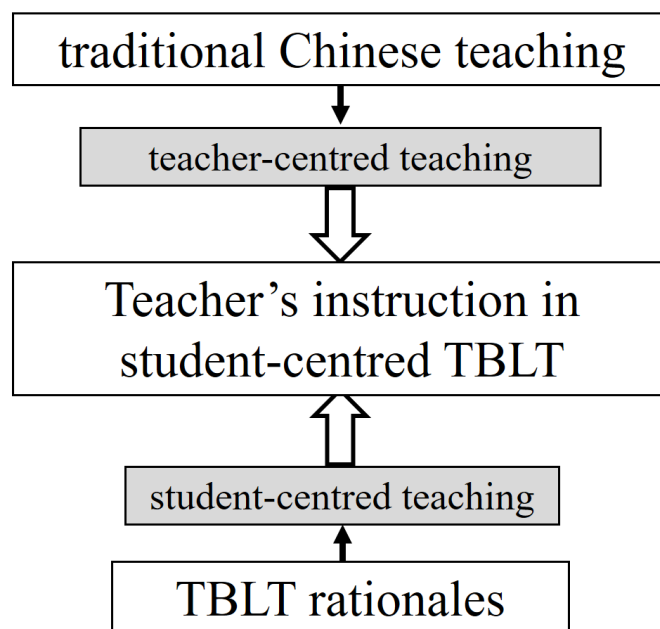


Figure 7.7 Teacher's instruction in student-centred TBLT

7.3.2.2. Focus on Language Forms in the Adjusted TBLT Practices

Another adjustment of TBLT practices that blends the traditional Chinese teaching methods and the TBLT rationales involves the learning goals that distinguish language forms and language meanings in TBLT. Traditional Chinese teaching practices are typically form-focused (Chen & Wright, 2017) and emphasise students' acquisition of linguistic knowledge (Carless, 2004). On the contrary, TBLT requires students to give primary attention to language meanings (Bygate et al., 2001; Nunan, 2004). In the pedagogical tasks, the students' achievement is mainly evaluated in terms of whether they convey the appropriate content (Ellis, 2003).

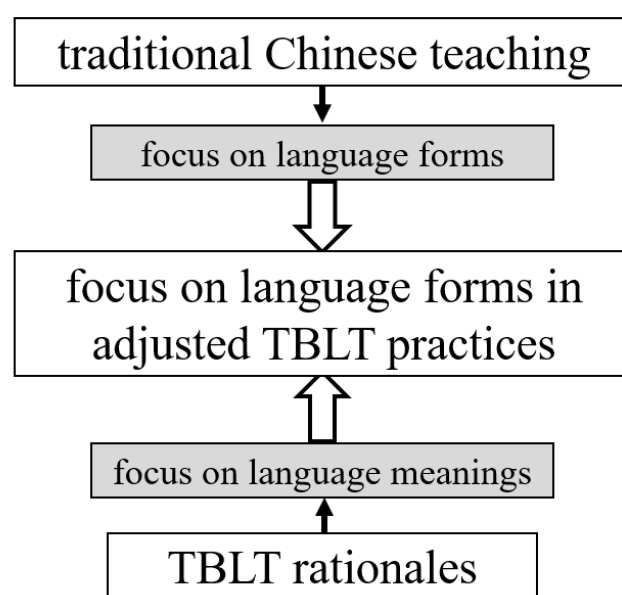
The perceived 'inadequate coverage of grammar' in TBLT (Ellis, 2009, 231) has faced considerable criticism. Since students are required to focus on language use in

communicative tasks, they can pay attention to simply conveying the language meanings rather than organising language in correct grammatical structures. Sheen (2004) asserts that teachers in TBLT only provide learners with brief suggestions regarding the selection of language usage. Language meanings thus are emphasised, sacrificing attention to language forms. Widdowson (2003), moreover, proposes a problem of TBLT in that it lacks direct presentation of grammar. As a result, students tend to miss opportunities to learn grammar in TBLT because they may ignore the grammatical errors in their language output during task performance, or they may be unaware of the chances to apply more complex grammatical structures.

Data collected from the current study reflected this problem clearly. Firstly, after practicing the concept of the attributive clause in tasks in Cycle 2, one participant still made a mistake in sample work: ‘you can go to the public library nearby because these books which the library collects is* interesting’. The students’ failure in acquiring the implicit knowledge of this grammatical structure displays the disadvantage of TBLT to teach grammar. Although Cycle 1 added the grammatical input in the pre-task stage and guided the students to use attributive clauses in their communicative tasks, the opportunities to analyse grammar were still insufficient for the students. Unlike in the traditional Chinese teaching methods that focus on grammar teaching and learning (Zheng & Borg, 2014), TBLT did not focus on grammar as a strong learning element. Therefore, in the interviews and guided journals, some participants expressed their need for the ‘teacher’s explanation’ about the grammatical structures to assist their understanding and application. Furthermore, the grammar-based examination system considerably influences Chinese students’ English learning (Benson et al., 2003; Carless, 2015; Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007); they therefore focus on what the examinations emphasise in their daily learning, namely, the verbal skills in terms of grammatical knowledge usage and vocabulary usage. Their insufficient exposure to grammar in the communicative tasks in TBLT thus demotivates their passion. This explains why some participants made such statements as, ‘although I really enjoy to complete the tasks in our English classes, I don’t think they can directly help us pass our English examinations’.

In order to motivate Chinese students’ passions to engage in TBLT, the researcher blended the focus on language forms with the focus on language meanings. Specifically, in Cycle 2, the researcher designed activities to communicate grammar (Fotos & Ellis, 1991) so as to

allow the students to learn grammar in meaningful conversations. The pedagogic tasks required the students to analyse grammatical structures in their communicative discussions. These tasks thus consolidated the students' focus on language forms during their meaningful communication. This adjustment combined the framework of TBLT and task-supported language teaching (TSLT) (Carless, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Li et al., 2016). Carless (2004) regards TSLT as “a weak version” of TBLT (p. 659) that allows the students to communicate using language forms introduced by the teachers in traditional instruction. TSLT thus differs from TBLT in that it links the traditional grammar-based instruction and the meaning-oriented TBLT. Furthermore, in Cycle 3, the researcher designed task-based examination preparation. The tasks aimed to enhance the students' examination skills by requiring them to discuss the examination questions. Because the examination system in China is mainly grammar-based (Carless, 2015; Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2007), the task-based examination preparation helped the students to balance their focus on language forms in their meaningful discussion. Figure 7.8 below thus shows how the focus on language forms in TBLT blended the grammar-based traditional teaching in China and the meaning-oriented rationale of TBLT in the current study.



7.3.3. Different Treatment to the Chinese Sociocultural Factors

In addition to investigating the interrelationships between TBLT practices and the Chinese educational context, as discussed in the previous two subsections, the current study also focused on the specific analysis of these two aspects, respectively, in the pursuit of culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. Firstly, regarding the Chinese context, the process of localising TBLT into the Chinese context, however, treats different Chinese sociocultural factors in different ways.

The first difference involves the comparison between desired and desirable values. Hofstede (2001) distinguishes these two types of cultural values. Desired values, described as being at the outer layer of our cultural structure, are associated with behaviours and attitudes in our daily practice. These values are somewhat subject to change (Pham, 2010). Desirable values at our inner layer of the structure, however, include our beliefs and values deeply rooted in the cultural principles. Being enduring and stable, people's desirable values are hard to change because it may take ages for the external practices to alter the classics of the culture.

The participants' different responses to some TBLT practices in this study can exemplify the difference between these two values. For instance, most Chinese students are used to the teachers' instruction in the traditional Chinese classes where they seldom have opportunities to take collaborative, group-based discussion. In the task-based classes in Cycle 2, however, they were required to learn autonomously in group-based tasks, and the teacher provided them few instructions about their language usage. The data showed that some students regarded the benefits of group work in their task performance, but nearly all of the participants in our focus still expressed demands for the teacher's instruction. The students'

different responses to the group work and student-centred learning can be explained by the desired and desirable values. The teachers' authority is deeply rooted in the Confucian culture in China, whereas students' limited group work is merely the concrete practice in the teacher-centred classes. The participants in the current study thus showed an acceptance to their group work in the new teaching practices, but they failed to change their belief in their teacher's instruction.

This contrast between desired values and desirable values thus advised the researcher to distinguish these two layers of cultural values when localising TBLT practices in China. These practices suggest how to pursue culturally appropriate teaching practices in the English classes of Chinese universities: teachers should possess techniques to modify the easily changed desired values to match teaching rationales of the pedagogy, but modify the pedagogical practices to suit desirable cultures because they are difficult to change.

This explains why the adjustments of TBLT practices in Cycle 3 treated the students' responses to group work and teacher's instruction in different ways. The adjusted TBLT in Cycle 3 still persisted in using communicative tasks where the students could learn English in their group/pair work. The guidance for the students' peer feedback and clear division of their labour in groups both aimed to enhance their collaborative abilities in group work. Therefore, the TBLT practices provided opportunities for the students to engage in group work and helped to change their attitudes towards it. On the other hand, because it is extremely difficult to change Chinese students' classical values that place teachers as their authoritative role models of learning (Rao, 1996), the researcher had to modify the TBLT practices by adding the teacher's instruction into the students' own task performance. In conclusion, the adjusted TBLT practices in the three cycles highlighted the influence of the Chinese sociocultural factors and treated the students' diverse cultural values in different ways. For the students'

attitudes and behaviours established in their cultural context, the teaching practices in this study maintained the TBLT rationales to change the students' cultural values. For the students' beliefs and values associated with their deeply rooted cultural principles, the TBLT practices were modified to fit the Chinese context. These different adjustments helped explore culturally appropriate TBLT practices that better suit the Chinese context and enhance Chinese students' learning in TBLT.

7.3.4. Diverse Adaptation Methods of Culturally Appropriate TBLT Practices

In addition to the above analysis of the Chinese context that described how some of students' cultural values were easily changed, whereas others were difficult to modify, the current study also distinguished among different TBLT practices by highlighting the reality that not all of the TBLT practices suited the Chinese context. Previous studies and this study agree that the discrepancies between the Chinese sociocultural reality and the TBLT rationales require practitioners and teachers to make localised adaptation of TBLT to better suit Chinese students' cultural values (Butler, 2011; Carless, 2004; Ji & Pham, 2018; Littlewood, 2007). However, a new question then arises: what practices suit the Chinese context and what do not? The following adjustments of TBLT provide examples for how to distinguish those TBLT practices that suit and conform to the Chinese context.

As discussed in the subsection 7.3.2, some TBLT practices contradict the Chinese context and have limited benefit on Chinese students' language learning. They were thus modified into culturally appropriate methods: for instance, the blended teacher's instruction in student-centred TBLT, and the focus on language forms in the adjusted TBLT practices. These adjusted TBLT practices localised the TBLT rationales according to the Chinese traditional teaching and better suited the Chinese educational context. In these adjustments,

the researcher emphasised the traditional Chinese cultural values and teaching practices, and thus modified the TBLT practices into teaching methods that are more compatible with the Chinese context. On the other hand, however, some TBLT practices themselves promoted the central rationales of this pedagogy, so the adjusted TBLT could neither ignore or abandon these practices. In order to modify these practices to be more culturally appropriate in the Chinese classes, the researcher designed some new practices, such as the practice of enhancing the students' group work and motivating the students at the lower proficiency levels to communicate actively in tasks. In these adjustments, the researcher emphasised the teaching rationales of TBLT and localised the TBLT practices to enable Chinese students to accept them and to learn more efficiently.

In conclusion, the truly culturally appropriate teaching methods might not exactly conform to the local context and to students' cultural values. The principal standard for the culturally appropriate pedagogy should be its positive impact on students' learning in the local context. Because it is common that there are contradictions between Western pedagogies and the Chinese context, it is very difficult for Chinese educators to modify the pedagogic practices to align completely with the local context. Instead, teachers should hold a comprehensive lens over the mismatches between the Western pedagogies and the Chinese context: the teaching practices opposite to the Chinese context can be both beneficial and problematic in Chinese classes. The mission to pursue culturally appropriate teaching methods is not to create the methods exactly conforming to the Chinese cultural context, but the purpose rather is to benefit Chinese students' learning and to enhance their supportive acceptance of these methods. So the emphasis of the pedagogies' own rationales and the blending of the Chinese cultural values and teaching traditions into the pedagogies are both significant for localising them.

The subsection 7.3 discusses how findings obtained in the study suggested the socio-culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context. Firstly, in order to address the mismatches between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales, TBLT practitioners in China could adjust TBLT practices in their actual EFL classes to simultaneously maintain the teaching rationales of TBLT and to suit the Chinese sociocultural context. Secondly, researchers also need to establish a more comprehensive view regarding the influences of the Chinese cultural and educational contexts on Chinese students' learning, so they could take advantage of traditional Chinese teaching methods by blending them with the TBLT rationales. Thirdly, teachers also need to distinguish the desired values and desirable values and apply techniques to modify the easily changed desired values to match teaching rationales of the imported pedagogy, but modify the pedagogical practices to suit desirable cultures because they are difficult to change. Finally, educators also should recognise that the truly culturally appropriate teaching methods might not exactly conform to the local context and to students' cultural values. The principal standard for the culturally appropriate pedagogy should be its positive impact on students' learning in the local context.

In conclusion, findings from the three cycles in the current study helped answer the research questions, and they contributed to the literature in the field of TBLT methodology by designing and implementing particular adjustments to (1) impact Chinese students' language learning, (2) suit the Chinese context in the local classrooms, and (3) address the problems caused by the sociocultural factors in order to benefit Chinese students' learning. Based on the findings and their association with the other studies, the next chapter will demonstrate the contributions of this study. Furthermore, in the intervention cycles, the problems caused by the mismatches between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales were resolved by the adjusted TBLT practices. Other problems, however, occurred due to the imperfect quality of

design-based research. The next chapter thus will also report the limitations of this study and implications for future educators.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This study conducted a design-based research study in order to pursue culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the English classes of Chinese universities. Underpinned by the concepts of mediation by artefacts and genetic methods in sociocultural theory, three cycles in the study explored what Chinese sociocultural factors influenced the participants' TBLT task performance. Based on these findings that show the students' challenges in learning with TBLT, the researcher further adjusted TBLT practices to better suit the Chinese context. Findings in the intervention cycles disclosed the impact of the adjusted TBLT practices. In this concluding chapter, the researcher summarises the major findings of the study. Different from Chapter 7 that focuses on how findings responded to the research questions, this summary in Chapter 8 reports how the results responded to the conceptual framework, i.e., how findings in the three cycles contributed to Chinese students' development in the four learning aspects. Based on this summary, the researcher then highlights the implications and contributions that the study made. Moreover, limitations the study faced and suggestions for future research will then be acknowledged.

8.1. Summary of Findings

The current study applied the adjusted TBLT practices that suited the Chinese context to maximise the positive impact of TBLT on Chinese students' language learning. Specifically, Cycle 1 adjusted standard TBLT practices based on conclusions from the literature review in order to enhance Chinese students' language learning. Cycle 2 then implemented these adjustments in actual English classes in order to view the impact on the students' development. At the end of Cycle 2, further adjustments of the TBLT practices aimed to address the challenges that the students faced in their task performance. Finally, Cycle 3

repeated procedures similar to those in Cycle 2 and resolved all of the observed problems by adjusting the TBLT practice at the end of Cycle 3. Findings obtained from the three cycles thus answered the two research questions regarding the impact of TBLT on Chinese students' learning and the socio-culturally appropriate TBLT employed in the Chinese cultural and educational context. The following figures illustrate the major findings of the three cycles. Underpinned by the conceptual framework regarding the TBLT practices that aimed to enhance Chinese students' development in four learning aspects, this section will summarise the major findings of the three cycles in terms of these learning aspects, namely, grammar learning, learner autonomy, language learning strategies (LLS), and willingness to communicate (WTC).

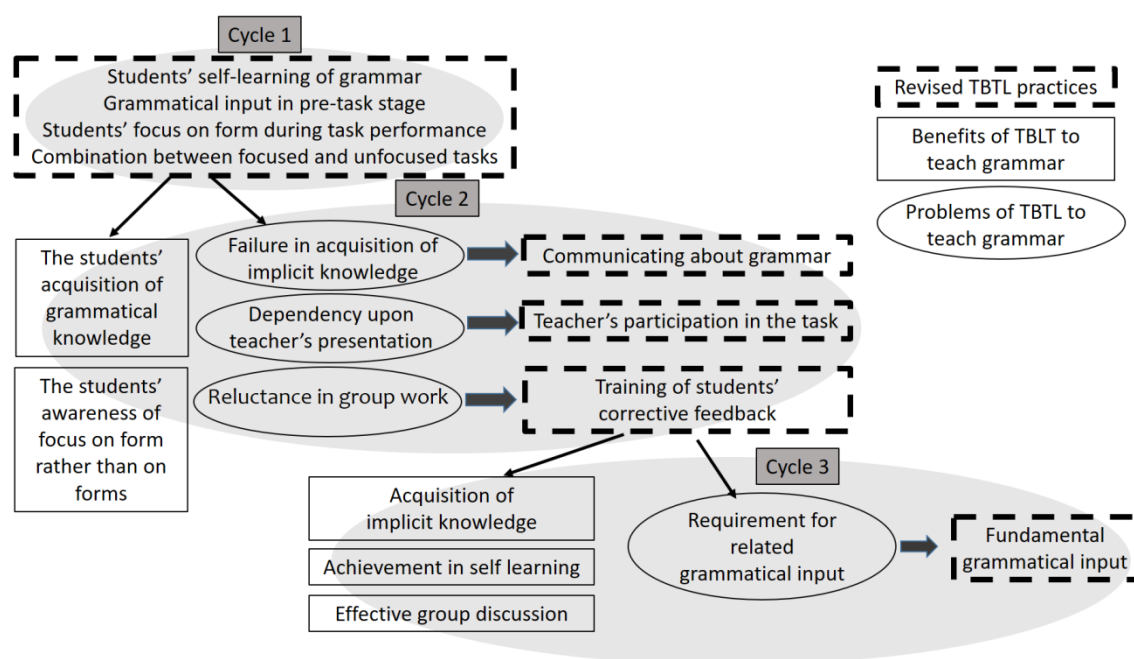


Figure 8.1 Three cycles to adjust TBLT to teach grammar to Chinese EFL learners

The adjusted TBLT practices to teach grammar in Cycle 1 included four major adjustments, as described in the subsection 2.3.1. Initially, to supplement the traditional teacher-centred teaching that paid more attention to language forms, Cycle 1 emphasised the rationales of

student-centred teaching and focus on form and combined the advantages of both unfocused tasks and focused tasks. Secondly, guided by these rationales and applying these features of TBLT, Cycle 1 also added the grammatical input in the pre-task stage, and emphasised the students' focus on form during their task performance. This followed the guidance of the previous studies to enhance the students' awareness of the focus on form (Ellis, 2003) and to offer prior language knowledge to the students (Li et al, 2016). These adjustments enhanced the students' acquisition of grammatical knowledge and their focus on language form rather than the language forms in Cycle 2. However, the students' failure in acquisition of implicit knowledge, as well as their dependency upon teacher presentation and reluctance with group work, still demotivated the students' grammar learning in Cycle 2. Then the researcher designed tasks of communicating about grammar, adding teacher's participation in the tasks, and providing training for corrective feedback to the students. These further adjustments successfully led to the students' acquisition of implicit knowledge, achievement in self-learning, and effective group discussion in Cycle 3. Finally, the only problem still observed in Cycle 3, namely, the students' requirement for related grammatical input, was resolved by the fundamental grammatical input added to TBLT in Cycle 3.

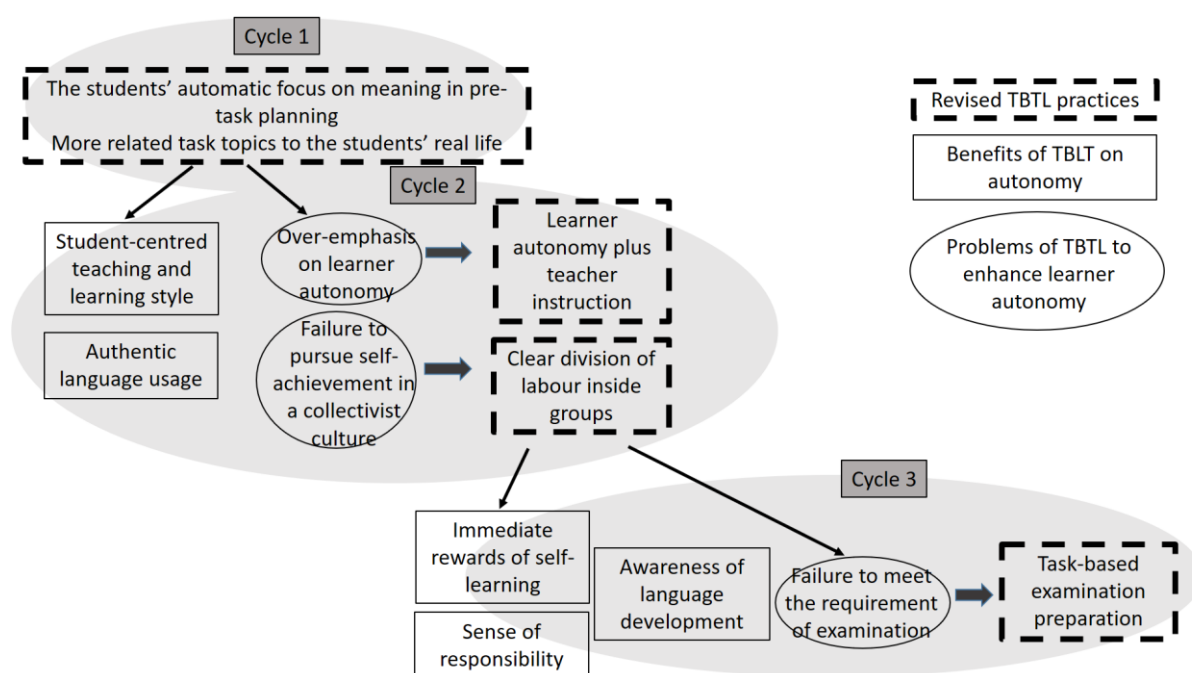


Figure 8.2 Three cycles to adjust TBLT to enhance the students' learner autonomy

In terms of enhancing Chinese students' learner autonomy, Cycle 1 guided them to place an autonomous focus on language meaning in pre-task planning and designed some task topics that related more to their real lives. Data analysis demonstrated the benefits of these adjustments that most students had enhanced learner autonomy in the student-centred teaching and learning styles as well as in their authentic language usage. Simultaneously, insufficient exposure to student-centred teaching in China caused some students' over-emphasis on learner autonomy, and the Chinese collectivist culture, moreover, caused their failure to pursue self-achievement in their group-based task performance. In order to resolve these two problems, Cycle 2 integrated learner autonomy and teacher instruction in the students' task performance and assigned a clear divisions of labour inside the students' groups. These adjustments led to the students' experiencing the immediate rewards of self-learning, the sense of responsibility, and the raised awareness of language development, thus enhancing their learner autonomy in learning with TBLT. However, some participants showed their concern about the failure of TBLT to meet the requirements of their

examinations, and this demotivated their learner autonomy in TBLT. The researcher thus designed task-based examination preparation at the end of Cycle 3 to integrate Chinese students' autonomous learning in TBLT and their pursuit of higher scores in their examinations.

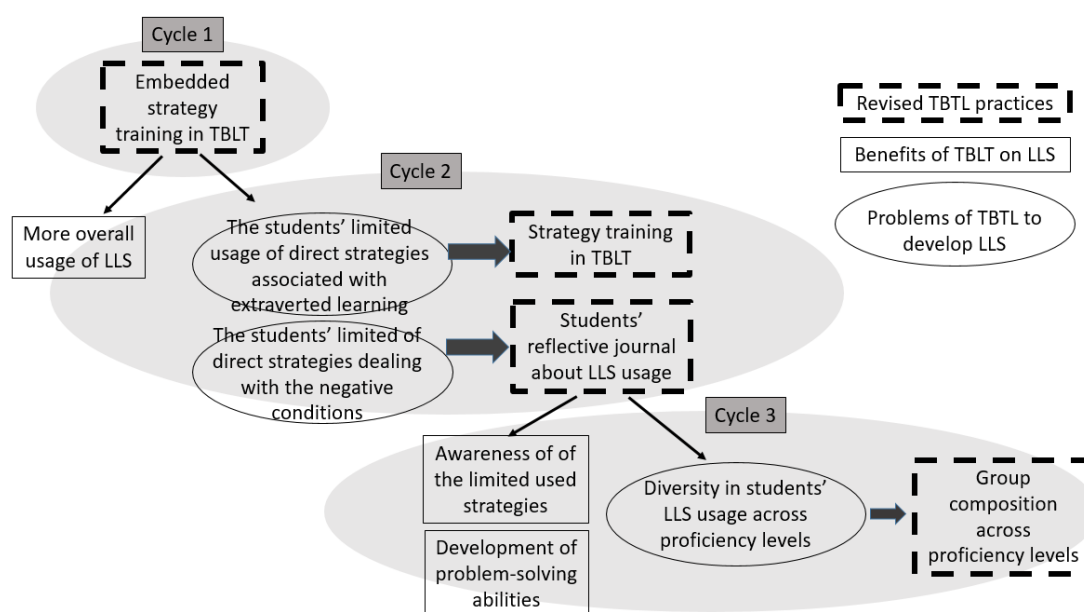


Figure 8.3 Three cycles to adjust TBLT to develop the students' LLS

Regarding the students' development in LLS usage, Cycle 1 embedded the strategy training into TBLT. This teaching practice adjusted the traditional strategy training in that it focused on all the five strategies typically ignored by Chinese students, and it distributed different strategies into different stages of TBLT. After implementing this adjusted TBLT practice in Cycle 2, both the quantitative and qualitative data showed the students' increased overall usage of LLS. The traditional Chinese teaching methods, however, still caused the students' limited usage of some direct strategies associated with extraverted learning and direct strategies dealing with the negative conditions. Therefore, the adjusted strategy training in Cycle 3 focused on these strategies that most students showed limited interest in using, and the researcher also guided the students to write reflective journals about their own LLS usage.

After Cycle 3, these adjustments raised the students' awareness of language development and enhanced the development of their problem-solving abilities. Then the researcher further guided the students to compose their groups across proficiency levels to address their diversity of LLS usage caused by their different proficiency levels.

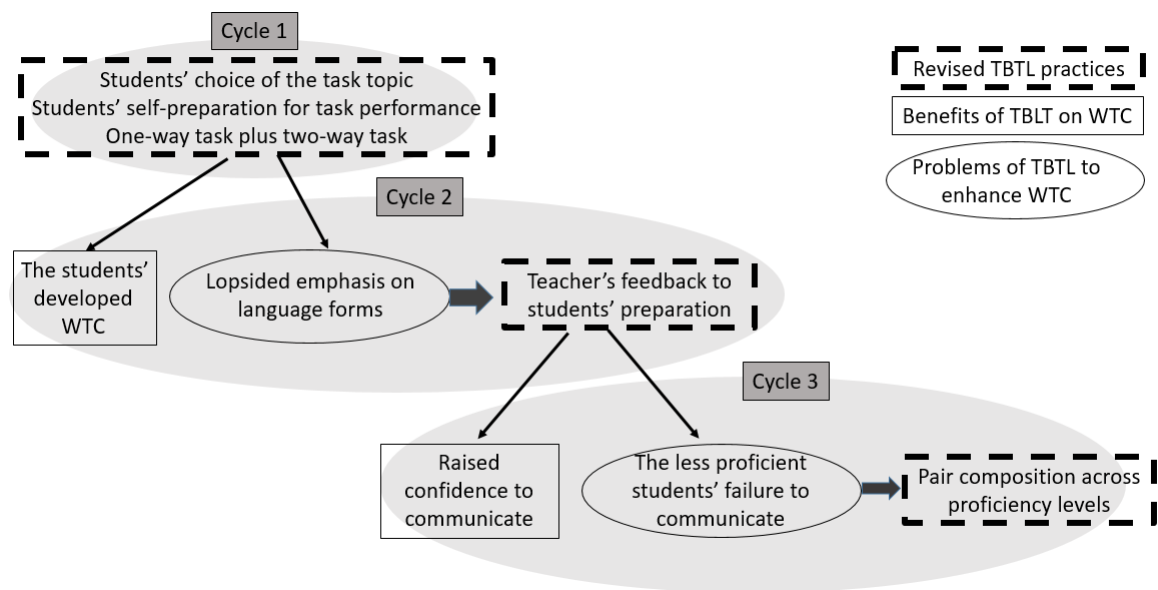


Figure 8.4 Three cycles to adjust TBLT to enhance the students' WTC

Cycle 1 designed three major adjustments of TBLT practices to enhance the students' WTC: to allow them to choose their own preferred task topics, to assist their self-preparation for task performance, and to integrate one-way tasks and two-way tasks in order to provide them more opportunities for communication. Data analysis in Cycle 2 showed the students' developed WTC due to the TBLT rationales and the adjusted TBLT practices, thus suggesting the benefits of these practices. However, during their communication, some students still had a lopsided emphasis on language forms. Therefore, at the end of Cycle 2, the researcher emphasised the teacher's feedback on the students' preparation to guide them to keep balance between language forms and language meanings. This raised the students' confidence to communicate in Cycle 3. The final challenge still observed in Cycle 3 involved

the less proficient students who still failed to communicate efficiently in their task performance. Therefore, the researcher instructed the students' to form pairs for composition across proficiency levels. This adjustment thus aimed to increase the students' mutual assistance in their pair work.

In conclusion, as discussed in Chapter 8, findings of the three cycles collaboratively answered the two research questions, and helped fulfil the research aim of exploring culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context. The three cycles thus argued some implications for future teachers and researchers and contributed to the teaching practices in China, as discussed in the following sections.

8.2. Implications of the Study

The current study aimed to explore the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China to benefit the Chinese university students' English learning. Therefore, the design-based research undertook pedagogic innovation to localise TBLT practices into the Chinese context. In this process, findings answered the two research questions, respectively, regarding the impact of TBLT on Chinese students' learning and about the culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China. Therefore, the current study suggested the following implications on how to improve Chinese students' English learning and how to localise Western pedagogies in the Chinese context.

8.2.1. Understanding about Chinese Students' Learning Based on Consideration of the Chinese Context

A large number of previous studies have revealed that Western researchers and students hold stereotypes against Asian students, and against Chinese students in particular (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zhao & Bourne, 2011). These stereotypes are personal perceptions about the attributes that characterise Chinese students as a group (Fiske, 1998; Ruble & Zhang, 2013). These stereotypes of Chinese students contain both positive and negative attributes. The positive stereotypes, for example, regard Chinese students as intelligent, hardworking, friendly, and polite (Park et al., 2006; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zhang, 2010). They facilitate the intercultural communication between the students from China and other countries. The negative stereotypes, however, generate discrimination against Chinese students (Lee & Rice, 2007), thus limiting the depth and accuracy of people's understanding of Chinese students (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). Because the present study aimed to reform the TBLT practices into a culturally appropriate pedagogy in China and to enhance Chinese students' language learning in TBLT, the findings obtained from the intervention cycles analysed Chinese students' changes and development in their learning preferences. The current study thus advocates for an open and impartial view of Chinese students from the perspectives of three examples.

Initially, Chinese students are often perceived as rote learners (Roberston et al, 2000; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Mathias et al, 2013) who heavily rely on rote memorisation (Cross & Hitchcock, 2007). Some Western researchers summarised the 'sequential four-stage process' (Mathias et al, 2013) of Chinese students' learning: memorising, understanding, applying, and modifying (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). In this stereotype, Chinese students apply rote memorisation as the primary and fundamental means for learning, and merely resort to the surface approach of learning based on memorisation (Mathias et al, 2013; Tan, 2011). Findings in Cycle 2 analysed the underlying reasons why Chinese students were accustomed to memorisation in their language learning. As shown in the subsection 5.1.2.1, the

dominance of memorisation-based teaching influenced Chinese students' dependency upon memorisation and impeded their acquisition of implicit knowledge of grammatical structures. The long-rooted, teacher-centred teaching in China applied the framework of teachers' presentation plus students' memorisation and practice. In this teaching framework, the students tend to focus on memorising the surface language knowledge without obtaining a deep understanding of the grammar structures. This finding thus contributes to the literature regarding analytical approaches to Chinese students' preferences for memorisation. This learning preference applied by most Chinese students stems from their long immersion in the memorisation-based teaching practices in China.

Furthermore, some Western researchers also regard Chinese students as unaccustomed to self-learning (Heng, 2018; Yan & Berliner, 2009). This results in Chinese students' suffering in their acquisition of English and in their interactions with their teachers (Heng, 2018), so they are typically passive and dependent learners, relying on their teachers' instruction (Roberston et al, 2000; Zhao & Bourne, 2011). Although the adjusted TBLT practices in Cycle 2 enhanced the students' learner autonomy in their student-centred task performance and their authentic language usage, findings still revealed the participants' dependency upon the teacher's presentation. As shown in the subsection 5.1.2.2, some Chinese students 'still needed some explanation provided by the teacher'. Findings in Cycle 2 thus contribute to a holistic analysis about Chinese students' failure in self-learning in that their learning preference for teachers' instruction is based in the teacher-centred tradition in China. Chinese students are familiar with teacher-centred instruction and lack the opportunities to learn language through their own analysis. The gradual influence of the existing educational practices in China forms Chinese students' learning preferences to rely on their teachers.

Moreover, another long-rooted stereotype of Chinese students is that they are always quiet and shy (Ho & Jackson, 2001; Ruble & Zhang, 2013). In this stereotyped view, Chinese students are always passive learners who seldom participate into the class discussion actively, but always maintain silence. Findings in Cycle 2 attributed this trait of Chinese students to the teacher-centred learning style in the Chinese classrooms. Specifically, participants' interview responses and journal reports in the subsections 5.1.2.3 and 5.4.2.2 elaborated how the teacher-centred teaching in China influenced their reluctance to participate in group interactions. The lack of students' opportunities to 'use English' and to 'learn together with their classmates in the hierarchical educational system in China, demotivated Chinese students' passion for mutual interaction and impeded their development of communicative skills in English. These findings thus help to establish a more realistic and impartial view of Chinese students in that their reluctance to participate in group discussion is formed in the teacher-centred teaching in China.

In summary, findings obtained in the current study contribute to a holistic understanding about Chinese students' learning based on the Chinese context: (1) They are not born as rote learners who resort to rote memorisation of learning materials, but they develop their preference to memorisation-practice learning frameworks in the memorisation-based teaching culture in China. (2) They are familiar with the teacher-centred instruction and lack the opportunities to learn language via their own analysis; therefore, they gradually prefer the reliance on their teachers. (3) They feel reluctant to communicate in English in classes because the classes are dominated by teacher-centred instruction.

These findings thus suggest the starting point of pedagogical reforms to improve Chinese students' learning: there is a need for a more open and impartial view of Chinese students based on consideration of the Chinese context. Specifically, the perception of Chinese

students' traits will be partial and unfair without exploring the sociocultural context that causes these traits. In order to improve Chinese students' learning in the face of pedagogical innovation, researchers should also consider the Chinese educational context that influences the students' learning. This implication obtained in the current study corresponds with the previous researchers' sociocultural understanding of Chinese students (Heng, 2018; Wu, 2015). Researchers and educators should face the reality that no one is born with a certain learning preference; by contrast, the students' learning preferences are gradually developed in the complex learning process (Syed & Kuzborska, 2018) and are associated with the sociocultural factors that impact the effectiveness of the pedagogic practices (Pham, 2011). When the learning preferences connected with the sociocultural context contrast with the rationales of one pedagogical practice, researchers need to modify the pedagogical practices to pursue culturally appropriate methods of this pedagogy. Because the sociocultural context is not easy to change or remove, to adjust the pedagogical practices is the only way to resolve the disjunctions between the students' learning preferences and the pedagogical rationales. Therefore, the second implication of the current study focuses on how to localise the Western pedagogies into the Chinese context.

8.2.2. Reflections on the Localised Adaptation of Western Pedagogies in China

After understanding Chinese students' learning in a comprehensive way by incorporating the Chinese cultural context, the next stage to improve students' learning is to design and implement teaching practices that are culturally appropriate to the Chinese context. In the design-based research, the current study answered the second research question about culturally appropriate TBLT practices in China, and thus provided the following implications about the localised adaptation of TBLT in China.

8.2.2.1. Analysis of Students' Opposite Responses to the Pedagogical Practices

Because the ultimate aim of pedagogical reforms is to improve students' learning, the first implication in this aspect of learning involves the consideration of students' own voices by investigating their actual task performance in the TBLT practices. As discussed in the subsection 8.1.1.1, different students had opposite responses to the similar TBLT practice because they had diverse previous learning experiences. This finding aligns with the proposals of genetic methods in sociocultural theory in that the ontogenetic factors in students' previous life stories influence their behaviours and development (Vygotsky, 1981).

The results disclosing the participants' different responses to the similar TBLT practices also contribute to the analysis about how to maximise the benefits of TBLT to more students. Firstly, when most Chinese students show their supportive attitudes towards one specific TBLT practice, this practice can be regarded as appropriate in suiting their learning preferences and cultural values. Future researchers can thus continue this practice to enhance most students' language learning, and, if necessary, to further explore its cultural appropriateness in the Chinese context. By contrast, some students' rejection of TBLT practices and their challenges in task performing can help identify the potential inappropriateness of these practices, and lead to further adjustments of them to better suit the Chinese context. Furthermore, because it is necessary to consider the students' diversity when examining their different attitudes and behaviours, the analysis about the appropriate TBLT practices that best fit most students' cultural values should integrate a comprehensive view about their historical development and the factors determining their process of development.

8.2.2.2. Integration between the Chinese Context and Pedagogic Rationales

Guided by the comprehensive understanding of Chinese students' learning based on the consideration of the Chinese context, the second aspect that deserves attention in the process of pedagogical innovation involves the integration between the Chinese context and the pedagogical rationales.

Most of the recommended TBLT practices are rooted in Western views of language teaching and learning (Littlewood, 2007); many are thus incongruent with traditional Chinese assumptions about learning (Hu, 2002; Zheng & Borg, 2014). Both previous studies and this study disclose the disjunctions between the teacher-centred (Halstead & Zhu, 2009; Hua, et al., 2011), textbook-based (Carless, 2007; Gong & Holliday, 2013; Rao, 2006) Chinese teaching methods that place an emphasis on language forms (Hu, 2002; Rao, 1996) and the student-centred (Willis, 1996; Carless, 2009; Shang, 2010), communication-oriented TBLT with an emphasis on language meanings (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). It is impossible for Chinese teachers to directly adopt these borrowed approaches in their daily teaching practices (Li et al., 2012). Because pedagogy is a process of complexity, influenced by multiple factors including politics, economics and society (Pham, 2010), teachers who are pursuing the success of a pedagogy must consider the influence of the local context on that pedagogy.

In China, where Confucian heritage culture dominates people's beliefs and values (Biggs, 1996; Liu & Xu, 2017), this influence of sociocultural context is particularly strong. Confucianism has been deeply embedded into Chinese people's mentality for many centuries and has impacted their teaching and learning practices. The Western-based TBLT, however, conflicts with Confucian values in terms of teachers' roles (Swain, 2005), language learning procedures (Robertson, 2014), and assessments for efficient learning outcomes (Ellis, 2003).

It is thus challenging for Chinese students to actively accept the TBLT rationales or to learn efficiently with TBLT practices if they are not localised in the Chinese context.

This explains why researchers (Carless, 2009; Hu, 2002; Pham, 2011) urge reflection on how to adapt the Western-based pedagogies in the local context in Eastern countries. As long as discrepancies between the Chinese context and the Western pedagogical tenets occur, localised adaptation of these pedagogies might better suit the Chinese context. The current study, therefore, reflected both the Chinese institutional and cultural factors and their respective influences on the implementation of TBLT in Chinese classrooms. Underpinned by the sociocultural theory, namely, the concepts of mediation by artefacts and genetic method, this design-based research adjusted TBLT practices to better suit China's socio-cultural-historic reality. As discussed in the subsection 7.3, the adjustments that considered the integration between Chinese context and TBLT rationales positively impacted Chinese students' English learning. These findings thus provide evidence for the necessity and benefit of this integration between the Chinese context and TBLT rationales.

8.2.2.3. Mutual Assistance of Actors at Diverse Levels

Another integration reflecting the comprehensive balance in the localised adaptation of TBLT in China involves the simultaneous emphasis of actors at diverse levels in the educational system. These actors mainly consist of teachers and students who engage in classroom activities. Furthermore, policy makers who determine types and contents of the educational system are also significant.

Firstly, this study and some previous studies (Gu, 2016; Peng, 2007; Peng, et al., 2015; Yu & Wang, 2009) all reveal that the grammar-based national examination in China focuses on

assessment of students' mastery of language knowledge, but it fails to guide Chinese students to enhance skills in authentic language usage. Therefore, in the process of adjusting the communicative-oriented TBLT in the grammar-based Chinese classes, policymakers should take action to balance TBLT practices and local educational systems. Since changing teachers' and students' attitudes and practices may be difficult during pedagogic innovation, without considerable intervention in the instructional policies, policy makers who determine the assessment methods should act first to support the educational reforms in China. Specifically, they can put bilateral emphasis on language examinations, balancing development in both knowledge and skills. Therefore, when Chinese teachers and students are faced with the examinations that highlight both the language knowledge and skills, it is possible that they would become more supportive of the adjusted TBLT practices with similar teaching emphasis.

Furthermore, teachers and students should also play their roles as major pillars in the teaching and learning practices. Findings in this study showed that teachers' and students' collaborative engagement into TBLT could realise the cultural appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context. Specifically, the contradiction between the Chinese teacher-centred teaching and the student-centred TBLT encouraged Chinese students' rejection and failure in the TBLT borrowed without any localised adaptation. Teachers' instruction was thus embedded into the student-centred TBLT practices, which was proved to better suit the Chinese context and to exert positive impact on the students' development in language learning. Therefore, this study suggested that when teachers embedded adjustments into the Western-based TBLT and students engaged actively into the teaching practices, they both collaborated to play their roles in TBLT.

8.3. Contributions of the Study

As introduced in Chapter 1, this study is significant because it contributes theoretically, methodologically and practically to the understanding of TBLT implementation in the Chinese cultural and educational contexts, and it further contributes to the pedagogical reforms of other Western teaching methods in China.

8.3.1. Theoretical Model of TBLT Implementation in China

The current study developed a theoretical model for the localised adaptation of TBLT practices in China. This model incorporated the consideration of both TBLT rationales and the Chinese cultural and educational contexts. As discussed in subsection 7.3, the truly culturally appropriate TBLT practices in the Chinese context stemmed from the adjustments of TBLT practices to make them suit the Chinese context. This study thus filled the gaps in the existing literature regarding Chinese students' difficulties in learning with TBLT, and it also provided some further evidence for previous researchers' proposals adjustments of TBLT. For instance, success of the integration of teacher's instruction into the student-centred TBLT supported the proposals of Carless (2004) and Ellis (2003). Furthermore, the three cycles in this study also proposed and examined some new TBLT practices to assist Chinese students' learning. For instance, task-based examination preparation, the division of labour in students' groups, and the composition of student pairs across proficiency levels all facilitated the participants' development in TBLT. Finally, the theoretical model for the adjusting of TBLT practices in China can also be generalised to apply to other Western-based pedagogies. By considering the discrepancies between the pedagogical rationales and the Chinese context, and by localising the pedagogical practices to suit the Chinese context, as discussed in this study, teachers can further enhance Chinese students' learning in their pedagogical reforms.

8.3.2. Practical Model to Assist Students' Comprehensive Development in Learning

In addition to the theoretical and methodological contributions, this study also provided a practical model for teachers to assist students' comprehensive development in their learning. This design-based research encompassed four learning aspects to examine the impact of TBLT practices, and thus suggested the following practical model to guide teachers' practices so as to improve students' development in diverse learning aspects.

Firstly, regarding the option of these learning aspects as teaching goals in the pedagogical practices, teachers could follow the practical standards applied in this study. Specifically, the four aspects emphasised in this study were chosen based on their significance in language learning, students' challenges to develop them in the Chinese context, and the possibility for TBLT to enhance them. Secondly, regarding the concrete practices for facilitating students' comprehensive development of diverse learning aspects, this study highlighted the integration of sociocultural contexts, pedagogic rationales, and relevant learning aspects. As illustrated in Figure 8.6, this study argued for a practical model of pedagogic innovation by considering the interrelationships between these three aspects.

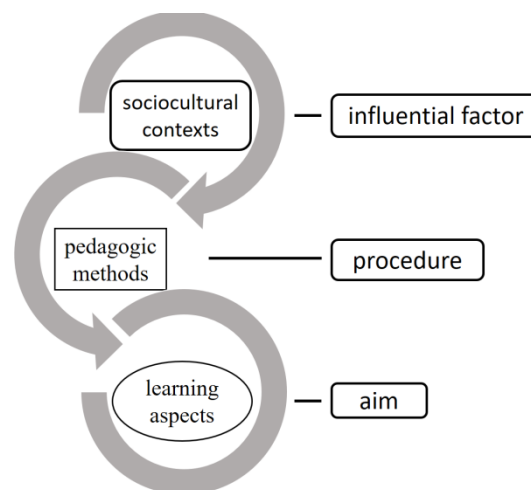


Figure 8.5 Practical model to assist students' comprehensive development in learning

Specifically, pedagogical innovation aims to facilitate students' development in the learning aspects, and regards these learning aspects as the aim of innovation. In order to promote the students' development in these learning aspects, the pedagogical practitioners should consider the influence of the sociocultural contexts. Based on the analysis of how the students could develop the learning aspects in the specific sociocultural contexts, the researchers could design and implement certain pedagogic methods in order to develop the students' learning aspects and to suit the sociocultural contexts. In summary, the learning aspects form the aims for the pedagogic innovation, the sociocultural contexts constitute the influential factors, and the design and implementation of pedagogical methods boost the procedure.

8.3.3. Application of Design-based Research to Undertake Pedagogic Innovation

In the process of adjusting TBLT practices to suit the Chinese cultural and educational contexts, this study also contributed to the research methodology during the conduct of the design-based research. Practically, design-based research in education focuses on designing a pedagogical intervention and evaluating its outcomes (Jetnikoff, 2015). As discussed in 8.3.2, the ultimate goal of pedagogical innovation lies in students' comprehensive development of various learning aspects. The current study thus developed a practical guideline for design-based research to integrate various learning aspects in the three cycles.

Firstly, the three cycles in this study all had various foci, respectively. Specifically, the three cycles all investigated the impact of TBLT practices on the students' grammar learning, development in learner autonomy, LLS, and WTC. This design helped the researcher hold a comprehensive view of how to adjust TBLT practices so as to enhance Chinese students' language learning in each cycle. By contrast, if one cycle merely emphasises the focus on one learning aspect, the adjusted TBLT practices in this cycle might not truly assist students'

learning. Furthermore, as discussed in 8.1.1, the correlations between learning aspects, pedagogic methods, and sociocultural factors are complex. This also requires each cycle to have holistic views about students' development in various learning aspects to guarantee the benefits of TBLT practices on students' learning in the Chinese context.

Secondly, the three unique cycles in the current study focused on the same four learning aspects, thus there were repeated foci for the three iterative cycles in the design-based research. This ensured that the problems associated with one learning aspect in the previous cycle might be addressed in the next cycle or cycles. In reality, it is common to notice practitioners complain about the time pressure for conducting a design-based research study, because the research validity can only be guaranteed if numerous iterations are executed (Hakkarainen, 2009; McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Plomp, 2013; Pool & Laubscher, 2016; Van den Akker, 2007). With more problems explored and addressed, the process would be more refined and better pedagogical practices would be produced. In the current study, the three cycles completed the three core stages, namely investigation, design, and evaluation (Reeves, 2006); thus the cycles' structure strengthened the research validity. In the three cycles, therefore, the repeated focus on the similar learning aspects guaranteed the sufficient exploration of issues about one learning aspect. For instance, if only Cycle 1 focuses on students' grammar learning and Cycle 2 addresses the related problems, but Cycle 3 changes the research focus and ignores grammar learning, then the investigation about Chinese students' grammar learning in TBLT might not be completed sufficiently. Furthermore, the identical foci in the three cycles also guaranteed the interdependency and correlation between the three cycles. If every cycle has different research foci, the adjustments of TBLT practices in these cycles might be isolated from one another. The repeated learning aspects investigated in the three cycles, therefore, integrated this design-based research as a unified and interrelated whole.

8.4. Limitations of the Study

Despite the study's contributions, possible limitations of the study are also acknowledged. These potential limitations are associated with the applicability of results, the data validity, and the investigation from teachers' perspectives.

Firstly, due to the time constraints and scope of the study, the current research could only investigate the perceptions and practices of 122 students at one university in China. Although considerations were made to include multiple backgrounds of the student participants, the findings of the study are not representative of the whole of EFL teaching in throughout Chinese universities. For further understanding of TBLT practices in the Chinese context and to extend the applicability and generalizability of the findings, future studies could extend their investigations to other tertiary educational settings, for example, at other colleges of education in China, or focusing on English majors.

Secondly, the limitations in the data validity regard the possible subjectivity caused by the researcher's insider stance. As acknowledged in Chapter 4 about the research methodology, the researcher simultaneously acted as the teacher in the study. Although the direct participation into the design-based research and the close observation of the participants' performance may be beneficial for data collection and analysis, there may also be some ethical issues inherent in the close researcher-participant relationship. Firstly, there may be a possible risk in terms of validity when the student participants expressed their perceptions about the teacher's roles in their language learning. I tried to minimise these risks by encouraging the participants by elaborating the research aims and procedures and establishing the rapport between the researcher and the participants, as shown in the subsection 4.6. Some participants, however, might still give responses that they perceive as catering to their teacher.

In the data analysis phase, the researcher tried to carefully distinguish the participants' responses. For instance, the participants' criticism on TBLT, especially on the teacher's instruction and assistance, were analysed as valid and objective data, whereas the participants' compliment on the teacher were deleted from the data coding. Furthermore, the ten focus participants might feel that they were receiving special attention from the researcher, so they might not have behaved naturally in their task performance.

Moreover, the current study aimed to focus on the students' development in their language learning, thus it did not examine the teachers' beliefs, perceptions, or understanding of this teaching method. Although the general shift in focus of attention from the teachers and teaching to students and learning in this study helped the adjustments of culturally appropriate TBLT practices from the students' perspectives, teachers' influence on the implementation of TBLT was not emphasised in the data analysis. Therefore, issues arising from the TBLT practitioners' perspectives also need to be researched to better inform the stakeholders, including teacher educators and educational administrators, to promote pedagogical reform in China.

8.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Findings of this study and the implementation process reveal four main issues that need to be explored in future research.

Firstly, longitudinal investigations can be designed to further inform this field by taking into account Chinese students' English learning over time. Further research into TBLT in other EFL/ESL teaching as well as learning contexts in other Asian countries are also necessary directions to achieve a fuller tapestry of TBLT in Asia.

Secondly, due to the limited time, the current study was constrained in the investigation of four learning aspects of the students' language learning. There is clearly a broad strand available for further research to thoroughly understand the influence of TBLT on the students' development in language learning. This strand can provide further contributions to the knowledge base of this teaching method.

Thirdly, the micro aspects in the implementation of TBLT and the influence of other sociocultural factors also need to be researched to better inform the cultural appropriateness of TBLT in China. For example, issues arising from task complexity (Robinson, 2001), or from the large class sizes of Chinese schools (Liu, et al., 2018; Luo & Gong, 2015), can be further explored by TBLT practitioners. These particular directions are still under-researched in the Chinese and regional TBLT literature.

Finally, this study focused on the cultural appropriateness of TBLT practices in China. Because China is typically one nation of the Confucian heritage culture (Park, 2000), many principles of language learning and Confucian cultural values in China show their similarity with some other Asian countries. It would be ideal if researchers could undertake studies to explore the cultural appropriateness in other Confucian countries of the TBLT practices that were developed in this study. Further research could re-test the effectiveness of strategies designed in the three cycles in this study and guarantee the success of the Western-based TBLT adapted for Eastern culture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. THE PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Project: “Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in English classes of Chinese universities: Challenges and Strategies”

Chief Investigator:

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
1. I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I agree to write guided journals after my classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I agree to allow the interview and my task performance to be audio-taped.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The questions listed here are only parts of the interview questions, and may be changed according to the specific situation in each cycle.

Impacts of TBLT on students' learning

1. Which aspect of your English learning do you think the teaching method applied in your English class benefits most, like your examination, your practical use of English? Why?
2. What English learning strategies do you master when you are performing the tasks?
3. Besides your English learning, do you think it is helpful to your anyother abilities, such as interaction ability or problem-solving ability through TBLT?
4. What different strategies did you use in the tasks?
5. Which part of the task do you think facilitated your understanding of English learning most?
6. What strategies do you use to perform the task when you feel the language input provided by the teacher is not sufficient to support you?
7. How do you use the time assigned for your pre-task planning? Which method do you think is most effective to your proceeding task performance?
8. When you perform the task in a group, what strategies do you use to promote the group interaction between other students and you?

Influential factors on students' task performance

1. Which parts in the task do you think can be revised to help you more in the examinations in the Chinese context?
2. What types of post-task activities do you think benefit you most, like teacher's feedback to your task performance, your self-revision of your mistakes?
3. When you realise that your language proficiency is not high enough to perform the task, what do you do to proceed?
4. Why did you apply the memory strategies more frequently compared with other categories of strategies?
5. Which one do you emphasise in your task performance, expression of your ideas, or the grammatical accuracy of English?
6. Do you find any diversity in your LLS usage with your partners with different proficiency level compared with you?"

APPENDIX C. QUESTIONS FOR GUIDED JOURNALS

The questions listed here are only parts of the journal questions, and may be changed according to the specific situation in each cycle.

Student's name: _____
Date: _____
Week: _____
Direction: <i>Please write as much as you can on the following sections reflecting on your experiences, feelings, and thoughts about the University English class and your English Learning practices/processes. Your writings could focus on, but are not limited to the guided questions below.</i>
Some reflectional questions about the task design and task implementation: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What types of language input do you need the teacher to provide in the future to facilitate your task performance?2. Compared with your traditional English classes, what design of today's task do you think benefit your English learning most?3. Given the chance, what type of tasks would you design for today's learning content?4. When you failed to memorise certain language knowledge that you used in the task, how did you response? Did you perform better in memorisation or in performing the communicative tasks?5. Compared with the assignments after classes, what did you gain from the post-task activities, like the teachers' feedback, your own revisions of your mistakes?6. What do you like about the teacher's way of facilitating you in your task performance? Do you expect the teacher to do other ways?7. What do you wish to change? Feel free to express it here.
Some reflectional questions about your task performance: <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. What do you think is your greatest challenge in your task performance today? How did you deal with this challenge?9. Did you perform the task individually or in a group? If in another way, can there be any differences in your task performance?10. What do you think is your greatest achievement in your task performance today?11. Do you have other things to share? Feel free to express it here.

APPENDIX D. GRAMMAR LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions listed here may be changed according to the specific situation in each cycle.

Your perception about grammar learning:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The most important task in my English learning is to learn grammar.					
I think grammar learning is important mainly because our examinations focus on grammar.					
I need the rote memorisation of the grammatical formula.					
I think I can learn the target knowledge during my own authentic use of English in TBLT.					
Compared with teacher's explanation, I prefer to learn grammar by using it by myself.					
I think discussing grammar together with my classmates can help me to understand the grammar knowledge more clearly.					
What I pay more attention to when I speak English is how to express in grammatically correct way.					
I can analyse the grammatical structures by myself.					
In task performance, I need the teacher to provide me assistance					

about the grammatical structures.					
I think my group partners' feedback to my grammar usage helped me a lot.					
I think only understanding the explanations of grammatical structures in the textbooks is not enough.					
I think using grammar in a correct way is more important than giving right answers in the examinations.					
I think grammar accuracy is more important than meaning expression in our language learning.					

APPENDIX E. LEARNER AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions listed here may be changed according to the specific situation in each cycle.

Your perception about autonomous learning:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I need the teacher's explanation of English knowledge, because I cannot fully understand them by myself.					
I think memorising the language knowledge of the target language is the best way to learn it.					
I learnt some collaborative abilities from my partners during our task performance.					
In group activities, I perform actively when I perform a "task".					
From other group members, I learn some learning strategies in task performance.					
When performing tasks in a group, I learn how to collaborate with my peer students.					
I feel happy and proud when I complete the tasks (together with my partners).					
I feel confident to speak English in my tasks.					
What I need to learn during my task performance is decided by my					

teacher.					
What learning strategies I can use to complete tasks is decided by my teacher.					
Compared with listening to the teacher's explanation, I think I learn English better when I use it in tasks.					
I think using English in tasks can benefit me a lot in my examinations.					
Compared with instructing our learning in front of us, I prefer our teacher to staying among us and providing some assistance.					
I think every group member contribute much to our task completion.					

APPENDIX F. LLS QUESTIONNAIRE

Items of LLS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Memory strategies					
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things					
2. I use new words in a sentence					
3. I create sounds or images to remember new words					
4. I create mental pictures to remember new words					
5. I use rhymes to remember new words					

6. I use flashcards to remember new words					
7. I physically act out new words					
8. I review English lessons often					
9. I use location to remember new words					
Cognitive strategies					
10. I say or write new words several times					
12. I practise the sounds of English					
13. I use words I know in different ways					
14. I start conversations in English					
17. I write notes, messages, letters, reports					
18. I skim read then read carefully					
19. I look for similar words in my own language					
20. I try to find patterns in English					
21. I divide words into parts I understand					
22. I try not to translate word for word					
23. I make summaries of information					
Compensatory strategies					
24. I guess the meaning of unfamiliar words					
25. When I can't think of a word during conversation, I use gestures					
26. I make up words if I don't know the right ones					
27. I read without looking up every new word					

28. I guess what the other person will say next					
29. If I can't think of a word I use a synonym					
Metacognitive strategies					
30. I try to find many ways to use English					
31. I use my mistakes to help me do better					
32. I pay attention to someone speaking English					
33. I try to find how to be a better learner					
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to complete my tasks					
35. I look for people I can talk to in English					
36. I look for opportunities to read in English					
37. I have clear goals for improving my English					
38. I think about my progress					
Affective strategies					
39. I try to relax when afraid of using English					
40. I encourage myself to speak even when afraid					
41. I give myself a reward when I do well					
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous					
43. I write my feelings in a diary					

44. I talk to someone else about how I feel					
Social strategies					
45. I ask others to speak slowly or repeat when I don't understand					
46. I ask my partner(s) to correct me when I talk					
47. I practise English with other students					
48. I ask for help from my partner(s)					
49. I ask questions in English					
50. I try to learn the culture of English speakers					

APPENDIX G. WTC QUESTIONNAIRE

Items of WTC	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).					
2. I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I didn't understand.					
3. I am willing to give a short speech in English to the class about my hometown with notes.					
4. I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).					
5. I am willing to ask my group mates in English how to pronounce a word in English.					
6. I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English how to say an English phrase to express the thoughts in my mind.					
7. I am willing to ask my group mates in English the meaning of word I do not know.					
8. I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English the meaning of an English word.					
9. I am willing to give a short					

self-introduction without notes in English to the class.					
10. I am willing to translate a spoken utterance from Chinese into English in my group.					