Secondary School Students' Perceptions of the use of Task-Based Speaking Activities in EFL Classes

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Abstract— English speaking competence is considered to be one of the most important aims of teaching and learning English. How to speak English naturally and fluently inside and outside the classroom is all that the learners need. This study, therefore, aimed to explore students' perception of task-based speaking activities (TBSAs) at a secondary school in Bien Hoa City, Vietnam. 134 students from 7th grade participated in the study. A mixed method research design was employed for the study with the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure the validity as well as the reliability of the study. For analyzing the data collected, descriptive statistics were employed for the questionnaire and content analysis for the interview respectively. The results of the study revealed that TBSAs were implemented frequently in EFL classes, confirming that all of the teachers have applied TBLT in their instruction. The findings also revealed that students not only found TBSAs useful for their improvement of language proficiency, skills of team work, and communicative competence, but they also discovered that they encountered such problems as classroom setting, mixed ability and some challenging tasks in the textbook when they join TBSAs. The study made some recommendations for both teachers and students to improve the quality of teaching and learning speaking skills at the school. This study is expected to shed light on the implementation of teaching speaking skills in the Vietnamese secondary school context and in other similar contexts.

Keywords— task-based speaking activity, perceptions, secondary school, Vietnamese context.

I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of EFL learners is to use English meaningfully and effectively. Kaur (2014), KeandCahyani (2014) Asakereh, Yousofand Weisi (2019) stated that English is used as an international language (EIL) or lingua franca for multipurpose. Politicians, businessmen, oversea students, and visitors use English to work and communicate with other people. Therefore, speaking skill plays an important role for non-native speakers all over the world.

Although the opportunities to learn English are myriad, ELF learners encounter problems in producing the language orally. Particularly, the problem becomes more challenging in EFL context. The reasons for this problem derive from inappropriate context, learners' affective and cognitive side, and the teachers' factors. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is considered to be an innovative approach for teaching communicative competence. In reality, TBLT has been worldwide introduced, for instance, in India, Hong Kong, Thailand, China, Japan, Vietnam, Australia, French and Venezuela (Nunan, 2004; Nunn & Adamson, 2006; Shehadeh & Combe, 2012). Both the teachers and learners hold positive attitudes towards TBLTand the implementation of TBLT in their EFL classrooms. In the context of Vietnam, TBLT has been employed in the EFL classroom. Researches on perceptions offactors affecting and the implementation of TBLT have been conducted, and have revealed significantly positive results, but most of them were conducted at higher education level.

To meet the educational goal set by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the demand of learners for communicative competence, teachers at Tan Hanh secondary school have employed innovative approaches flexibly. Time for teaching speaking skills is lengthened; the selected topicsare relevant to the learners' prior knowledge; English is used more frequently. However, the learners' low proficiency, psychological obstacles, and passive learning style are considerable challenges to the implementation of communicative approach in their EFL classrooms.

From the benefits of TBLT in the practice of teaching speaking skills, this study aims to explore the learners' perception of the use of TBSAs.The objectives of the study are (a) to examine the 7th grade students' perceptions of the types and teachers' implementation of TBSAs in EFL classes at Tan Hanh Secondary School, and (b) to explore the 7th grade students' perceptions of the benefits and problems of the use of TBSAs in EFL classes at Tan Hanh secondary school. The current study about TBASs at secondary level is to fill the gap in the context of study.Based on the objectives, the study attempted to address two research questions as follows:

1. What are the 7th grade students' perceptions of the types and teachers' implementation of task-based speaking activities in EFL classes at Tan Hanh Secondary School?
2. What are the 7th grade students' perceptions of the benefits and problems of the use of task-based speaking activities in EFL classes at Tan Hanh Secondary School?
3.

II.   BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Definition and Features of Task-Based Language Teaching

Tasks are activities that people try to achieve the goal in spite of difficulties. According to educational definition, tasks are classroom activities that students cooperate to achieve the outcome. In addition, the tasks may help them relate the language with the real world.Willis (1996) wrote that"tasks are always activities where target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome". To design a task, task components are important elements to be considered. Nunan (1989), and Nunan (2004) identified goals, input, activities, settings, teachers' and learners' role as task components. What is more, task design including task types, task selection and task complexity in which task types play an important role in deciding the organization of task-based syllabus, task-based course, and the learners' development. Task types can be categorized differently.

Basically, Willis (1996) proposed a number of types for pedagogic task: listing, ordering and sorting, comparing and classifying, problem solving, sharing experiences, and creative tasks. In addition to task design, framework for a task-based lesson is considered as "the standard format for a task-based lesson".

2.2 Purposes of Task-Based Language Teaching

Nunan (1989), Willis (1996), Harmer (2007), Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, and Lambert (2019) agreed that TBLT meets the demanding of communicative language teaching, and TBLT aims to improve communicative competence for the learners. TBLT focuses on meaningful communication related to real-world context. It creates a free and relaxing environment where anxiety and inhibition disappear, so students are confident and eager to engage in learning activities. In addition, TBLT provides an actual context where students are members of society and culture during their process of groupwork. Learning activities provide the learners with opportunities to cooperate, discussion, negotiation, so students can employ their prior knowledge and background experience orally. As a result, their speaking skills improve naturally, fluently, spontaneously then accurately. Attentionally, the purposes of TBLT are useful for creating meaningful communication. They meet the general perception of both the teachers and the learners of using English, especially, for speaking activities.

2.3 Types of Task-based Speaking Activities

Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, and Lambert (2019)identified psycholinguistic perspective, psychological perspective, educational perspective, and sociocultural perspective related to TBLT. Accordingly, task-based performance is measured by 4 basic areas: complexity, lexis, accuracy and fluency. Speaking tasks are helpful to improve these areas. Van den Braden (2006) stated that "tasks invite students to focus primarily on meaning exchange and to use language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes". Therefore, the task requires the learners use verbal or non-verbal language to achieve the required goal for communication.

TBLT focuses the learners on how to use the language appropriately, so the role of speaking skill is emphasized among the four skills. Researchers have listed useful activity types to increase the quality of speaking in-and-out classroom context. Prabhu (1987) and Richard (2006) proposed a typology of task type including (1) information gap, (2) reasoning gap, (3) and opinion gap activities. Six types of speaking activities which were listed by Willis (1996) include listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert (2019) mentioned to one-way information gap and two-

way information gap. To the extent of task types, role play encourages the learners to adopt the new language into their communication (Nunan , 2003). Interview task encourages the learners to share their opinion, attitude, or personal information. Ur (2012) considers speaking tasks as solving problems are useful for EFL learners.

The above-mentioned types of tasks are enquired in order for students to employ their cognition, personal experience and prior knowledge to operate the task. Although the process to approach each type of task is different, it is helpful for student to utilize their knowledge and ability. To express the meaning correctly, the knowledge of language function or speech acts is necessary.

2.4 Benefits and Problems of UsingTask-based Speaking Activities

TBSAs bring students with significant benefits because students can use target language to convey the meaning. Thanks to familiar topics and real-world tasks, students are able to utilize their prior knowledge and background experience to express opinions or argument in communication. TBSAs require using groupwork which focuses on meaning and safe learning environment helps students improve their communicative competence naturally. Through group work students are able to improve team work skills and continuous interaction, and negotiation of meaning.

Many studies on TBSAs conducted in EFL contexts have proved thatdifferent types of speaking tasks in the EFL classroom (e.g., giving opinion, role play, survey, discussion, question and answer, exchanging information, giving opinion, class survey, discussion) are useful in teaching English speaking skills to EFL learners(Widia & Astawa, 2014; Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Le & Huynh , 2019).More specifically, Kiernan (2005) explored that storytelling helps low level learners move from silence to babble. Addtionnally, Kuśnierek (2015) showed that role play helps students to improve their speaking skills. Albino (2017) identified that TBSAs help students to improve their speaking fluency. Le and Huynh (2019) indicated that TBSAs improve students' attitude, motivation, interaction, language skills and knowledge. It can be seen that TBSAs are useful for students, especially, whose level of proficiency is low. Students are able to generate their holistic intelligent effort, and try out what they want to convey (Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert, 2019). Regardingproblems of usingTBSAs, researchers have shown that time constraint, individual difference, mixed ability and crowded class, and the use of L1 and examination are considered to be problems hindering the implementation of teaching speaking activities (Nunan, 1989;Willis & Willis, 2007; Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert, 2019).

III.   RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Participants

134 students ranging from the age of 12 to the age of 14 at Tan Hanh secondary school, Bien Hoa city, participated in the study. 63 (47%) of them are male, and 71 (53%) of them are female. Convenience sampling was employed in this study.

3.2 Research instruments

With the aim of finding the answers to the two research questions, the study employed *questionnaire and interview* to collect data. Firstly, the questionnaires consist of 62 items, 9 items for "yes", "no" question, 13 items for five-point Likert scale and 40 items for four-point Likert scale. The Likert scale ranges from "1" for "strongly disagree" to "4" or "5" for "strongly agree". Teachers' implementation of TBSAs included 13 items (α =.950); the benefits of TBSAs included 20 items (α =.935); problems of TBSAs included 20 items (α =.839). Secondly, 9 questions for interview were employed to collect data supporting for quantitative data. All the items of the questionnaire and interview questions were first written in Vietnamese so that they were easy for the students to understand and complete the questionnaire and the interviews.

3.3 Data collection and analysisprocedures

Data collection took place during the first semester of the school year 2021-2022. For the questionnaire, 163 questionnaire copies in Vietnamese were administered to the students. However, 134 copies were relevantly completed and 29 copies of them were answered incompletely. It took about 20 minutes for the participants to go all over the questions and discussions. For the interview, 10 students volunteered to answer the questions. It took each student 20 - 30 minutes to answer the interview questions. All the interviews were recorded fully so that the collected interview information was perfect and full. Furthermore, the researcher also took notes during each interview.

To analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, SPSS Statistic version 26.0 was employed to find out the value and calculate the means (M), the standard deviation (SD), the frequency, and the Cronbach Alpha.The meaning of the mean (M) scores is interpreted as follows: regarding to the extent of students' perception of the teachers' implementation of TBSAs: M= 1.00 - 1.80: Never = Very low; M= 1.81 - 2.60: Rarely = Low; M= 2.61 - 3.40: Sometimes = Moderate / Average; M= 3.41 - 4.20: Often = High; M= 4.21 - 5.00: Always = Very high and regarding the students' perception of the benefits and problems of

TBSAs: M= 1.00 - 1.75: Strongly disagree; M= 1.76–2.50: disagree; M= 2.51 – 3.25: Agree; M= 3.26 – 4.00: Strongly agree. For the data collected from interviews, content analysis was employed. Students who participated in the interview were coded as S1, S2, S3 ……to S10.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Types &teachers' implementation of task-based speaking activities

Research question 1 aimed to discover types of task-based speaking activities and the teachers' implementation of TBSAs in EFL classrooms. The results from both the questionnaire and interview are displayed as follows:

4.1.1 Types of task-based speaking activities

The data collected from the questionnaire displayed in table 1 show that the speaking tasks in the textbooks were selected and sorted out. Accordingly, nine TBSAs were sorted out. They were put in a list and the participants were asked to identify which tasks were often used for teaching speaking in the classroom. In fact, most of the students agreed that those tasks were performed in their classes.

Table 1: Types of Task-based speaking activities (TBSAs)

No.	Task-based speaking activities	n (students)	%
1	Giving opinion about something	112	91.8%
2	Role-play	93	76.2%
3	Making a list of something	116	95.1%
4	Interviewing someone about something	109	89.3%
5	Doing group/class survey	107	87.7%
6	Finding the fact of something	81	66.4%
7	Retelling about something	75	61.5%
8	Problem-solving	109	89.3%
9	Discussing about something	112	91.8%

As can be seen in the Table 1, all of the types of TBSAs were carried out in classes. All tasks reached the agreement at 61.5 percent up. Specifically, among 134 students, 107 students agreed that "Doing group / class survey" task was often used to improve speaking skills. Both "Problem-solving" task and "Interviewing someone about something" task achieved 89.3 % of agreement. More interestingly, both "Giving opinion about something" task and "Discussing about something" task received 91.8 % of students' agreement. Obtaining the highest rate in the table is "Making a list of something" task. It may be understood that this kind of task was organized in group and got active engagement from all of the classmates. Meanwhile, the last two tasks "Retelling about something" and "Finding the fact of something" obtained 61.5 % and 66.4 % of agreement respectively.

In conclusion, the students' high agreement showed that the finding is reliable and prove that there is a frequent implementation of TBSAs in EFL classroom.

4.1.2 Teachers' implementation of task-based speaking activities

It can be seen in Table 2 that all teachers employed TBSAs in their EFL classroom (M>4.69). Obtaining the highest agreement level is that the teachers assessed what the students had achieved (item 11) with M = 4.83 indicating that the teachers always assessed the performance of students to help the students improve their speaking skills. Although item 5 and 12 had the lowest mean score (4.67), it is still inferred about the frequency of the teachers organizing activities to provide the students with vocabulary and grammar structures to prepare for the speaking activities, and asking the students to have self-correction and peer-correction when they taught speaking in EFL classes. The implementation of TBSAs related to TBLT instruction and introduction, classroom interaction, motivation and assessment are presented with M=4.82, 4.75, 4.80, 4,78, 4.73, 4.69; 4.67 and 4.79 respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of teachers' implementation of TBSAs

No	Items	N	Mean	St. D
1	Introducing the activity to the students	134	4.75	.789
2	Telling the students about the purpose of each activity	134	4.80	.734
3	Telling the students what knowledge and skills they should achieve after the task	134	4.78	.729
4	Instructing the students how to carry out the task	134	4.82	.635
5	Organizing activities to provide the students with vocabulary and grammar structures to prepare for the speaking activities.	134	4.67	.658
6	Asking the students to work in pairs and groups	134	4.73	.603
7	Telling the students what to do in pair and group work	134	4.69	.663
8	Creating interaction among the students and with the teacher	134	4.73	.603
9	Encouraging the students to get involved in the speaking activities.	134	4.78	.630
10	Asking the students to present what they have prepared	134	4.69	.593
11	Assessing what the students have achieved	134	4.83	.569
12	Asking the students to have self-correction and peer-correction	134	4.67	.646
13	Giving feedback to what all the class has done.	134	4.79	.549

More specifically, the qualitative data from interviews were also taken into account to attain information about the teachers' implementation of TBSAs in EFL classroom. Most students gave positive answers about their teachers' implementation of TBSAs. Accordingly, clear instructions on the purpose of the task, what to do, and how to do with the task were introduced carefully. Here are some obvious opinions of the students:

"My teacher tells us about the purpose and the outcome of the task." (S3); "My teacher gives us clear instruction on what to do and how to do with the task." (S4)

Students expressed their opinion about the role of the teacher during students' process of working. Here are some typical opinions from the students:

"Our teacher usually interacts with us, so we feel really happy and comfortable to express our ideas to her." (S6); "Our teacher encourages us to engage in speaking activities by cute encouragement, so I get more motivated" (S8)

How the teachers organize the class to help speaking activities effectively, students' answers were stated as follows:

"My teacher divides the class into four or six groups so that we can work together to complete the task." (S6); "We are asked to work in group, so the better students can help low proficient students study better, and the task can be completed." (S9)

Regarding students' performance of the task, several students expressed their opinions as follows:

"My teacher asks some students to perform the task." (S9); "Groups of students are asked to perform the task after an allotted time of discussion." (S10)

In alignment with the findings from the survey, students also revealed teachers' implementation of assessment after students' performance. For example, some student reported:

"My teacher gives comment on the strengths as well as the weakness of each group so that I can remember the knowledge deeply." (S5); "When all group finish their presentation, our teacher asks us to grade the presentation of each group with some criteria related to vocabulary, pronunciation, meaning, and grammar, then she grades our presentation. As a result, I can remember the vocabulary and grammar well. Moreover, I understand how and when to use the language meaningfully." (S2)

In conclusion, the collected data from the questionnaire and interviews revealed a consistent result that teachers frequently implemented TBSAs in the class. It can be inferred that a typical principle of TBLT "*learning by doing*"

was employed.

4.2. Benefits and problems of task-based speaking activities

Research question 2 attempted to discover the benefits and problems of TBSAs applied in English classes. In the sections below the data collected from the questionnaire

and interview are presented and interpreted. Benefits of TBSAs are presented first, then followed by problems of TBSAs.

4.2.1 Benefits of task-based speaking activities

Improvement of English knowledge and skills

As can be seen in Table 3, TBSAs helped students improve their English knowledge and skills. The mean scores are very high (M>3.27). It is evident that students agreed that when they joined TBSAs, their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar improved positively (item 1,3,4) with M=3.40, 3.42 & 3.37 and SD = .910, .852&.906 respectively. Especially, they understood and applied English in specific situation correctly (item 5, 7) with M=3.38&3.50 and SD = .830& .733 respectively. Moreover, TBSAs supported the

skill of reading and listening (item 6) with M=3.27 and SD =.815. In addition, the speaking activities helped students to improve skill of team work (item 8) with M=3.39 and SD= .831. They cooperated, assigned the duty for each member in the group so that each of the group member could involve in the activity actively and responsibly. It can also be seen that item 7 had the lowest deviation of .733, and item 1 had the highest standard deviation of .910. Item 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 had the standard deviation of .890 ,852, .906, .830, .815 and .831 respectively showing that the students' answers are rather consistent. It is suggested that TBSAs are useful for students to get improvement in the academic English, skills of using English, and skill of cooperation.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of Improvement of English knowledge and skills

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	The TBSAs help the students to improve English pronunciation.	134	3.40	.910
2	The TBSAs help the students to improve English speaking skills.	134	3.46	.890
3	The TBSAs help the students to improve English vocabulary.	134	3.42	.852
4	The TBSAs help the students to improve English grammar structures.	134	3.37	.906
5	The TBSAs help the students to apply grammar and vocabulary in speaking.	134	3.38	.830
6	The TBSAs help the students develop other skills such as reading and listening because the students have to read and listen before speaking.	134	3.27	.815
7	The TBSAs help students understand and memorize the language more deeply and easily.	134	3.50	.733
8	The TBSAs help the students to improve their team work skills.	134	3.39	.831

The data collected from the interviews also revealed that students thought they were benefited from TBSAs applied in their classes. They said that they were satisfied with the TBSAs. Several students expressed:

"I'm really satisfied with speaking activities because the activities help me improve my pronunciation and my cooperation. I can learn from my friends and express myself to them." (S1); "In fact, I like speaking activities because it is useful for my speaking English. I can remember and use the vocabulary. I feel confident to convey my idea in English in spite of my short-term memory." (S4)

To the extent of group work, S6, S7 and S10 stated that group work or team work is cooperative, interactive and helpful. S6 stated *"Yes. Because I can communicate, express my feelings, my opinion and interact with my group members."*. Additionally, S7 reported that *"Group work is really helpful for me because, you know, I am not good at English, my group members help me to understand*

more about what I have to do, and understand something about the language area that I missed." Sharing the same idea, S10 expressed that *"Group work is wonderful. We can cooperate to complete the product with higher quality."*

It can be concluded that students considered their English proficiency and their team work skills improved thanks to TBSAs. It should be noticed that students found interaction offered scaffolded learning naturally, and learning difficulties could be negotiated during the process of group work.

Development of attitudes, beliefs and motivation

As shown in Table 4, the mean scores of 6 items are high (M >3.30 and SD >.772). Item 13 and 14 have the mean score of 3.35 and 3.34, and the standard deviation of .835 and .833 indicating that students showed their positive beliefs in TBSAs. They agreed that TBSAs helped them use English purposefully and cooperatively, and enabled them to improve their imagination and creativity.

Moreover, the result of item 9, 10 and 11 (M=3.37, SD=.772; M=3.31, SD=.750; and M=3.28, SD=800) revealed that students were motivated, confident and

excited when they joined TBSAs. Additionally, students found TBSAs useful because they were more autonomous in learning English (M=3.28, SD=.800).

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of development of attitudes, beliefs and motivation

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
9	The TBSAs makes the lessons more exciting and effective.	134	3.37	.772
10	The TBSAs help the students to develop their confidence in trying out whatever language they know.	134	3.31	.750
11	The TBSAs help the students to become more motivated in learning English.	134	3.28	.800
12	The TBSAs help the students to become more autonomous in learning English	134	3.30	.832
13	The TBSAs engage the students in using English purposefully and cooperatively.	134	3.35	.834
14	The TBSAs enable the students to improve imagination and creativity.	134	3.34	.833

When students were asked about their attitudes toward TBSAs, they also stated positive opinions as follows:

"Yes. Speaking activities are really interesting, I want to improve my speaking skills so I read pictures book in English, search google to learn the meaning and the pronunciation of some vocabulary. I also practice listening conversation on YouTube e.g.," (S6); "It is interesting and exciting. I like group work and interact with my friend in such a comfortable learning atmosphere. I hope my teacher will employ TBSAs more frequently"

Particularly, S8 stated *"Maybe yes. If I have prior knowledge and background experience related to the topic, I am interested to engage. If not, I play the role of a receiver"*. Whereas, S7 showed negative attitude toward speaking activities, the student stated that *"No, because I find speaking English is difficult, I can't pronounce correctly, I forget everything related to English quickly"* and *"It is boring and difficult."* It is noticed that if students do not have enough prior knowledge, background

experience related to the topic, they would be demotivated. What is more, if students' proficiency is low, they would find TBSAs boring.

Development of an interaction environment

The displayed data in Table 5 describe the interaction environment. The mean score is high (M>3.36). The item of "The TBSAs provide students with a relaxing English learning atmosphere" ranks highest in the table with the mean score of 3.50 indicating that TBSAs created classroom interaction. Students enjoyed the learning atmosphere.Followed by item 18 (M=3.48), item 15, 16, 17 and 20 (M=3.39, 3.43, and 3.36) revealed that students found speaking activities interactive. It is indicated that real-life situations, cooperation, the frequency of using English in working, and the flexibility in using different strategies for communication enhanced and developed the classroom interaction. Moreover, the standard deviation distributes closely to the mean score. This suggests that students' answers were consistent.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of Development of an interaction environment

No	Items	N	Mean	D
15	The TBSAs provide real-life situations for the students to practice speaking English.	134	3.39	.765
16	The students can increase cooperative relationships with each other when doing those tasks.	134	3.43	.818
17	The TBSAs help the students to use the target language (English) more often.	134	3.43	.740
18	The TBSAs increase student-teacher and student-student interaction.	134	3.48	.701
19	The TBSAs provide the students with a relaxing English learning atmosphere.	134	3.50	.712
20	The TBSAs give learners chances to try out communication strategies to achieve communicative goals.	134	3.36	.789

As can be noticed in the interview, students responded positively about their attitudes toward the classroom

atmosphere and group work. Some students considered:

"Yes. Because speaking activities are enjoyable, I am

really free and be myself" (S2); *"I am entirely comfortable when I work in group. Our group members love communicating and expressing opinion, so they are eager and active in speaking activities."* (S3).

In conclusion, the findings revealed that students found TBSAs useful for their learning English speaking skills. First, they were interested in learning speaking English because of safe learning environment, interesting activities, exciting interaction, and collaborative working spirit. Second, they were able to remember the vocabulary the pronunciation and the function of the language deeply. Third, they were able to produce English purposefully and meaningfully. Last but not least, student found TBSAs as a useful learning scaffolding to negotiate learning difficulties.

4.2.2 Problems of task-based speaking activities

Students-related problems

The data displayedin Table6 show students' agreement

with the student-related factors. Interestingly, the collected data showed that more or less, all students agreed with all the items. They reported thatthey differed in knowledge, learning experience, background experience, abilities and characteristics (Item 1,2,3,4,5) with M=3.48, 3.50, 3.52, 3.55 and 3.51 respectively, which might cause problems in the implementation of TBSAs. Relatively, the mean score of items 6, 7, 9 and 12 indicated that students lacked vocabulary, prior knowledge and background experience related to the topic (M=3.28, 2.96, 3.52 and 2.80). Specifically, students used Vietnamese to discuss and negotiate the tasks, they found the topics difficult to convey ideas and knowledge when working in group. In addition, inability to construct oral sentences in a limited time (M=3.19), shyness and nervousness in group work (M=2.74), and shyness in speaking English with other classmates (M=2.90) prevented them from performing their knowledge.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of student-related factors

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	The students differ in their knowledge.	134	3.48	.634
2	The students differ in their learning experience.	134	3.50	.723
3	The students differ background experience	134	3.52	.646
4	The students differ in their abilities.	134	3.55	.710
5	The students differ in their characteristics.	134	3.51	.733
6	Students are not familiar to topicsin the textbooks.	134	3.28	.760
7	The students only use Vietnamese when discussing something with classmates.	134	2.96	.929
8	The students are not confident enough to speak English with other classmates.	134	2.90	.887
9	The students lack of knowledge and English vocabulary related to the topics.	134	3.52	.680
10	The students are unable to construct oral sentences in a limited time.	134	3.19	.886
11	The students are always shy and nervous when working in groups	134	2.74	.980
12	It is very difficult for the student to convey ideas and knowledge to others when working in groups.	134	2.80	.972

Students who participated in the interview shared their opinions about factors affecting their speaking English in EFL classroom. Firstly, students stated that they did not have enough time to convey the meaning or perform their products. S3 stated that *"One of my problems is that I sometimes respond to the speaking situation slowly, so I need more time to practice speaking.";*S4 said that *"I find difficult to convey the idea instantly and spontaneously because I have short term memory. As a result, I think time to speak is not enough."* Secondly, in terms of thepsychological problem, S1 said, *"Well, I am quite shy when producing English orally"*; and S7 expressed that *"I*

*am not confident to use English."*Thirdly, students expressed their opinion about their English proficiency and ability as follows:

"Sometimes, my vocabulary related to and my prior knowledge of the topic do not meet the requirement of the task."; (S8) "I don't have enough vocabulary and grammar to convey the full meaning." (S9)

Teacher-related factors

The data displayed in Table 7 shows that the standard deviation is high. Item 15 ranks highest with the standard deviation of **.865**, and item 14 ranks lowest with the

standard deviation of **.708.** It is suggested that teacher-related factors did not affect students' speaking activities negatively. In addition, it can be shown that the result from

mean score of items 13, 14 and 15 is high (M=3.26, 1.57 and 3.38) indicating that the teachers had positive effects on students' speaking activities.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of teacher-related factors

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
13	The teacher is interested in using TBSAs in the class	134	3.26	.858
14	The teacher instructs the students carefully when implementing a TBSA.	134	3.57	.708
15	The teacher does not dominate the class all the time during the TBSA.	134	3.38	.865

Specifically, most of the students reported that their teachers were interested in using TBSAs in the class with M=3.26 and SD=.858. They also agreed that the teachers instructed the students carefully when implementing a TBSA with M=3.57 and SD =.708. Particularly, they thought that the teacher did not dominatethe class all the time during the TBSA with M=3.38 and SD=.885.The findings of the interview with students revealed that teachers' instruction and attitudes were not problems in teaching and learning English. Several students expressed: *"Yes. I love learning English so I am really happy when joining speaking activities." (S5); "Yes. Speaking*

activities provide a relaxing learning atmosphere, I am free to speak. The lessons seem to be interesting." (S9); "Yes. Interacting with group members orally is so relaxing and comfortable." (S10)

Environment-related factors

The data displayed in Table 8 show the mean scores of all 5 items (16, 17, 18, 19&20) are rather high, so it should be noticed that students agreed that the textbook, limited time, crowded class, and class settingwere considerable challenge to students in the performance of speaking skills with M = 3.39, 3.10, 3.44, 3.28, & 3.41 respectively.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of environment-related factors

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
16	The TBSAs in the textbook are difficult and boring	134	3.39	.803
17	The time allotted to each TBSA is limited.	134	3.10	.917
18	There are too many groups because the class has over 40 students.	134	3.44	.741
19	The desks and benches are fixed so it is not easy for the students to move around when necessary.	134	3.28	.906
20	When all the students speak together it gets too noisy so it is not easy to control of the classroom.	134	3.41	.806

Regarding responses collected from the interview, students also reported similar opinions as follows:*"I am not happy with the noise around me because it makes me confused, or forget what I am going to say." (S1); "The class is crowded." (S10); "The sound from other groups disturbs my thought." (S4); or,* S2 expressed their disagreement with the fixed desks and benches. S2 stated that *"Because of the fixed arrangement of tables and benches, I am not free in moving to make more communication and interaction."*; and S3 expressed *"Anyway, I love interact with students in other groups, but it is not easy to move around."*

The students' opinions about their problems with vocabulary, prior knowledge related to the topic were stated as follows:*"I don't have enough vocabulary." (S6); "Sometimes, my vocabulary related to and my prior*

knowledge of the topic do not meet the requirement of the task." (S8); "I don't have enough vocabulary and grammar to convey the full meaning" (S9).

In conclusion, it should be noted that student-related factors and environment-related factors were factors considerably affecting TBSAs while teacher-related factors were not. The data in Table 8 revealed significant results about the problems students faced in the implementation of TBSAs. Environmental-related factors had the higher mean score than student-related factors (M=3.32 and M=3.20).

V.   DISCUSSION

Types and implementation of task-based speaking activities

Regarding data collected from questionnaire, the findings revealed that 9 types of TBSAs in TIENG ANH 7 were frequently implemented in classes for 7th grade students at THS. It is evident that teachers at THS have changed their teaching approach; they aimed to teach speaking competence instead of grammatical competence only. This aim meets the MOET's requirement. Moreover, the teachers found all the task types necessary for teaching and learning speaking skills. It could be explained that every task requires purposeful and meaningful interaction and communication, so students can always obtain their goals in learning speaking skills (Shehadeh, 2005). A few types of tasks were not frequently chosen in EFL classroom; that might be because the allotted time was insufficient, the tasks were challenging, and were not mentioned frequently in the textbook.

Regarding the consistence of collected data from questionnaire and interview, the findings revealed that the teachers always implemented TBSAsin the class. It can be inferred that the teachers employed the framework for task-based language teaching to teach TBSAs. In pre-task phase, the topics, the objectives as well as the outcome of the taskswere introduced to the students. Moreover, students were provided with necessary input, and were instructed what and how to do the task clearly. Willis (1996) identified what to do in pre-stage to set up a successful task includes introducing the topic, identifying the topic language, and giving task instruction. In task cycle, students work in pairs or in small groups to perform their language proficiency, prior knowledge and background experience. Willis (1996) stated that this stage support 'the use of and the exposure to the target language'. What is more, pair work and group work provide more opportunities for classroom interaction, time talking turn, and a comfortable learning environment. Through group work students are able to negotiate their learning difficulties, and notice the language gap. In the language focus phase, students know how progressive in fluency and accuracy they get through peer's assessment and teacher's assessment. In other words, students are consolidated from meaning to form (Willis, 1996; Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert, 2019).

Regarding the teachers' role, it should be noticed in the findings that the teachers applied student-centered teaching and learning style. They play the role of organizers, observers, facilitators or sometimes participants. It is suggested that the teachers should motivate and energize students in the topic and task, provide clear and adequate instruction for the task, and provide support and interact with students if it is necessary. It is evident that the teachers in the context were flexible in their instruction. They encouraged their students to become autonomous learners through such activities as group work, self- and peer-correction.

Benefits of task-based speaking activities

It can be seen that all the students showed strong agreement with the four major benefits that they received from TBSAs. Accordingly, students' English knowledge and skills have improved. This finding is consistent with that of studies conducted byErten and Altay (2009), Humanez and Arias (2009), Sarıçoban and Karakurt (2016), and Vo and Nguyen (2021). Erten and Altay (2009) showed that TBSAsmight create a morecollaborative learning environment and also provide opportunities for real life-like language use. The result of the study by Humanez and Arias (2009) revealed that students' quality of oral interaction has been improved thanks to TBSAs. What is more, Sarıçoban and Karakurt (2016) indicated that task-based activities improve the EFL learners' listening and speaking skills. The finding of a study conducted by Sameer and Abdallah (2020) indicated that task-based instructional program improved students' speaking skills of accuracy. In addition, one of the advantages which received the high agreement is that the TBSAs provide the students with a safe learning atmosphere where students join interesting and fascinating activities, so they had a positive attitude toward TBSAs. This proves that a relaxing learning environment is very important to the students at the age from 12 to 13. Ur (2012) identified the young learners learn bestthrough implicit learning in enjoyable, or interesting activities. Harmer (2007) identified that children at the age of 12 and 13 learn indirectly. Specifically, they learn from everything around them, and theirunderstanding come from seeing, hearing, touching and interacting. As a result, if the teachers organize activities with games or physical movement, the students will be more active and motivated. The findings of the study are also in alignment with Harmer's (2007) theory stating that students at this age love working in pairs and in groups, they have an acute need for teacher approval and peer approval. In addition, 'they are keen to talk about themselves and respond well to the learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the class'.

Problems of task-based speaking activities

The finding revealed that student-related and environment-related problems were factors affecting speaking activities in EFL classroom. Particularly, "Students differ in their abilities" and "There are too many groups because the class has over 40 students" causedmore challenges. It can be seen that the two factors are closely related to each other. Harmer (2007) stated that the differentiated classroom prevents students from performing and

producing the target language. Because of multiple intelligences, students who have higher level of language proficiency have to slow down their speed of learning. Moreover, they have to spend time to explain and instruct their classmate to do the task, so they might feel boring. What is more, students who have lower level of language proficiency find difficult to keep pace with the speed of good learner, so they feel unease. The findings of the study are similar to the findings of previous studies. For example, factors affecting the implementation of TBLT are large size and mixed-ability class (Le, 2014; Ji ,2017; Jong, 2006; Xiongyoung & Samuel, 2011).

The finding also revealed that students were unconfident in using English and discussing their ideas when they worked in group. This might derive from their lack of prior knowledge, vocabulary and grammar related to the topic. This finding is consistent with that of the studies conducted by Ak Şentürk (2012) and Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) revealing students' speaking problems including lack of appropriate vocabulary and grammar, incorrect pronunciation, and lack of confidence. Students' lack of English and prior knowledge related to the topic of the task might cause shyness and reticence about performing English orally.

VI.   CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The data collected from the questionnaire and interviews in this study prove that the textbook used in THS cover different types of TBSAs for the 7th grade TBSAs. These activities are being implemented in the context of the study and students benefit a lot from these activities. Nonetheless, they also encounter several problems during the time they engage in these activities to achieve the goals of the course. Based on the findings, the study suggests that

the teachers should train themselves to utilize the innovative approach, TBLT, to help students improve their English-speaking competence. Interesting activities with interesting topics and continuous encouragement from the teachers and the classmates might attract students' active engagement. Secondly, teachers should organize the class logically to limit the problem of mixed ability, crowed class, and time constraint; for example, a group of four might be suitable because all of the group members are able to take their turn to produce the language. Additionally, the goal of learning English is to use the language meaningfully, so it would be better if students have more than three periods per week. Next, students should be provided with appropriate source like video clip or corpus related to the task in order to study themselves, and have a good preparation for the coming lesson.

TBSAsfoster the students' achievement of English learning goal, so students should utilize this innovative approach to improve their speaking skills. First, students should engage in group work actively to improve their confidence, speaking competence, appropriate cooperation and interaction, and team work skills. Secondly, time for studying English in EFL classroom is limited, so they should learn English autonomously. More specifically, they should work with English frequently. The Internet might be helpful because students can use online dictionary to improve their pronunciation, social network to communicate with international friends in English, or website to find necessary input to enrich their knowledge. Practicing speaking English with friends outside the class is also a good way to learn English. Therefore, students should spend time discussing topics that they have learnt at school, and the task that they are going to prepare for the next lesson. If they practice English in group outside the class, their reticence, shyness, and stress might disappear gradually, and they would be more confident and active in TBSAs in EFL classroom. Finally, because of the COVID 19 pandemic, students do not have chance for face-to-face interaction. It is suggested that students should record their group discussion via the assistance of digital tools like Google meet or Zalo call. If they do so, communication, interaction, and cooperation still occur.

This study was conducted in a secondary school with 143 grade 7th students, so limitation cannot be avoided. It is suggested that another study can be conducted in other contexts at the same level to collect more evidence showing that TBSAs are useful for secondary to improve the quality of English-speaking skills.

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