School of Education

Contextualizing Educational Innovation:
Task-Based Language Teaching and Post-Soviet Schools in Ukraine

Tetiana Bogachenko

This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University

July 2016
Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature: ..............................................

Date: ......................................................
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people without whom this work would have never seen the world. In the first place, I would like to acknowledge all the participants who invested their precious time and enthusiasm into this project. These are the teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, and school principals who allowed me to collect data in their schools. Without their love for teaching and openness to innovation it would have been impossible to obtain understandings that enlighten the discussion presented in this thesis. It was the creativity of the local educators and their ability to overcome difficulties that inspired me to look beyond the existing practices into the local needs and capacity to innovate.

I am thankful to Curtin University for providing me with a scholarship and excellent supervision. I am immensely impressed by and grateful for the continuous support and mentoring from my supervisor Professor Rhonda Oliver who was always available for feedback and advice throughout this journey. Her commitment and hard work through the numerous drafts and editing procedures have been phenomenal. Our frequent discussions about education, culture, and everything above and beyond have helped this study to crystallize, develop, and reach completion. I would like to thank my associate supervisor Professor Rob Cavanagh who believed in my ability to complete this degree and provided prompt and valuable advice at various stages of this process. My gratitude is also to Associate Professor Craig Lambert for his thoughtful comments and intelligent identification of the possible “cracks” and “leaks” that have helped this thesis to stay afloat and reach its destination successfully. I would also like to acknowledge the university staff for their prompt assistance with filedwork and conference related travels.

My dear friends Kirrily Kilbane and Dr Sally Horner supported my dream to do research and to facilitate educational change in Ukraine from the very beginning, and for this I am most grateful. They also provided valuable feedback on the first drafts of the proposal. My wonderful colleague and co-author Dr Laura Perry set a high benchmark for planning, writing, editing, and publishing of academic work, as well as for doing cross-cultural research and particularly research in post-communist
societies. My friends Natalie Chapman, Elena Kolesnik, Maureen Kapitola, Kirrily Kilbane, and Karen Schwenke provided invaluable support and encouragement, cooked meals for me, and extended their understanding for my inability to be around due to the multiple travels and busy months of reading and writing.

The most heartfelt thanks go to my mother Liudmyla who raised me as a single parent through the uncertain times of the 1990s. I am forever indebted for her love and care, and for reading me bed-time stories every night. This is the reason for a deep passion for reading and learning without which this thesis would have been impossible. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my first teacher Tamara Ovchar who, unfortunately, passed away at a very young age, but whose legacy lives on in her students.
Abstract

This study investigates the ways an innovation in foreign language teaching (FLT) can be contextualized in order to be appropriate and beneficial for the target educational context. It was undertaken in post-Soviet schools in Ukraine, the second biggest country in Europe where there is a growing demand for foreign language skills. Since Ukraine became independent as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, all areas of life including education have experienced the impact of globalization. For example, local FLT policies have been influenced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a document that promotes the use of pedagogic tasks as a teaching tool. For this reason, task-based language teaching (TBLT), an approach that encompasses tasks and also reflects current understandings about language acquisition, was utilized in this study as a prospective innovation.

However, the implementation of TBLT does present challenges, especially in FLT settings, and there is a lack of research into how these can be addressed and minimized. Therefore, this study examines whether and how TBLT can be contextualized to become appropriate for post-Soviet schools in Ukraine.

As a first step, the literature on educational change management, and in particular an ecological approach to innovation, including the top-down and bottom-up influences, glocalization, and adaptation prior to adoption through Means Analysis was discussed. Next, empirical data were collected from Ukrainian schools in order to determine whether TBLT can provide stakeholders with the means to achieve their local and global goals more effectively. Further, potential benefits and challenges of TBLT in this particular context were examined.

To achieve these goals, the present study was both qualitative and exploratory. It was inspired by ethnography and guided by a constructivist ontology within the interpretivist paradigm. Hence, special care was taken to ensure that the participants’ voices were represented in the written account. A three-phase research design was developed to examine the research problem through three different lenses. First, an investigation of the current FLT policies and practices in Ukraine was conducted using document analysis, lesson observations, and interviews with teachers, teacher
educators, and a policy maker. In the second phase, the teachers attended a presentation on TBLT and provided their feedback via follow-up focus group discussions. The third phase incorporated three case studies that probed deeper into the emergent issues and allowed description of different FLT micro contexts in Ukrainian schools.

The findings show that FLT in Ukrainian public schools is undergoing transformation that combines existing local elements with the new developments, suggesting that change through innovation is possible. However, it must be acknowledged that opportunities across the public education sector are not evenly spread, and there is a mismatch between the official FLT discourse and actual practices. Further, the implementation of any new teaching approach will require careful consideration of the many cross-curricular goals, have a focus on culture, and take into account the structured environment. The findings do suggest that some existing practices of Ukrainian FLT can be used as a foundation for TBLT. Six key areas of potential benefit and five areas of potential challenges of TBLT implementation have also been identified, with some pointing to the need for further research.
Table of Contents

Declaration .................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................... iii
Abstract ....................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables ............................................................................................................... xv
List of Figures ............................................................................................................. xvi
List of Appendices ..................................................................................................... xvii
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations ......................................................................... xviii

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................... 1
  1.1. Background to the study ...................................................................................... 1
  1.2. The research problem and the Research Questions ........................................ 4
  1.3. Significance of the study .................................................................................... 5
  1.4. Organisation of the thesis .................................................................................. 7

Chapter 2: Background ............................................................................................... 9
  2.1. Overview .............................................................................................................. 9
  2.2. Post-Soviet education: A historical perspective ................................................ 9
  2.3. Ukraine as a post-Soviet country ....................................................................... 12
      2.3.1. Educational reforms in post-Soviet Ukraine .............................................. 12
      2.3.2. Languages in post-Soviet Ukraine ........................................................... 15
  2.4. The role of foreign language teaching (FLT) in Ukraine .................................. 16
2.5. Chapter summary ............................................................................................................. 19

Chapter 3: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 21

3.1. Overview ......................................................................................................................... 21

3.2. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) .......................................................................... 21
    3.2.1. The development of FLT ......................................................................................... 21
    3.2.2. From communicative to task-based language teaching ........................................... 23
    3.2.3. Tasks in the classroom ......................................................................................... 27
    3.2.4. Tasks in educational planning ............................................................................... 34
    3.2.5. Challenges of TBLT implementation ...................................................................... 39
    3.2.6. Summary ............................................................................................................... 41

3.3. Change management: Towards context-appropriate innovation .................................. 42
    3.3.1. An ecological approach to innovation ................................................................. 42
    3.3.2. Top-down and bottom-up models of implementation ......................................... 46
    3.3.3. Glocalization ........................................................................................................ 49
    3.3.4. Adoption and adaptation ...................................................................................... 53
    3.3.5. Summary ............................................................................................................... 56

3.4. Needs Analysis (NA) for change management .............................................................. 57
    3.4.1. The development of NA ....................................................................................... 57
    3.4.2. Means Analysis .................................................................................................... 61
    3.4.3. Methodological options ....................................................................................... 63
    3.4.4. Ethnographic focus: Culture and context ............................................................ 65
3.4.5. Summary ................................................................. 71

3.5. Chapter summary .......................................................... 72

Chapter 4: Method ............................................................... 74

4.1. Overview .................................................................. 74
4.2. Research paradigm ...................................................... 74
4.3. Conceptualization of the research context ......................... 75
4.4. Research design .......................................................... 76
4.5. Phase 1 ...................................................................... 79
  4.5.1. Context ................................................................. 80
  4.5.2. Participants ............................................................ 80
  4.5.3. Materials ............................................................... 82
  4.5.4. Procedures ............................................................. 83
  4.5.5. Analysis ................................................................. 85
4.6. Phase 2 ...................................................................... 87
  4.6.1. Context ................................................................. 88
  4.6.2. Participants ............................................................ 88
  4.6.3. Materials ............................................................... 90
  4.6.4. Procedures ............................................................. 91
  4.6.5. Analysis ................................................................. 91
4.7. Phase 3 ...................................................................... 91
  4.7.1. Context and participants ........................................ 92
4.7.2. Materials........................................................................................................... 93
4.7.3. Procedures...................................................................................................... 94
4.7.4. Analysis.......................................................................................................... 95
4.8. Quality control mechanisms............................................................................... 96
4.9. Ethical issues...................................................................................................... 99
4.10. Chapter summary ............................................................................................ 100

Chapter 5: FLT curriculum and pedagogy in Ukraine ........................................... 101

5.1. Overview ............................................................................................................ 101
5.2. Setting ................................................................................................................ 102
  5.2.1. Rationale for FLT ...................................................................................... 102
  5.2.2. The place of FLT in the curriculum ......................................................... 105
  5.2.3. Syllabus and content guidelines .............................................................. 107
  5.2.4. State examinations .................................................................................... 109
5.3. Conceptualization of FLT in the Ukrainian curriculum ................................. 110
  5.3.1. Transformation ....................................................................................... 111
  5.3.2. Flexibility: Weakened centralization ...................................................... 113
  5.3.3. Multiple goals ........................................................................................ 115
  5.3.4. Focus on culture ...................................................................................... 118
  5.3.5. Forms and meaning combined in a weak CLT ...................................... 123
5.4. Chapter summary ............................................................................................. 129
Chapter 6: FLT practices in Ukrainian schools ................................................. 130

6.1. Overview ................................................................................................. 130

6.2. Setting .................................................................................................... 130

6.2.1. FLT classes: Time and facilities ....................................................... 131

6.2.2. Instructional materials ........................................................................ 132

6.2.3. Teaching method: The PP(P) model .................................................. 135

6.2.4. Teacher and student roles ................................................................. 137

6.2.5. Assessment .......................................................................................... 144

6.2.6. The use of L1 ...................................................................................... 146

6.3. Characteristics of FLT practices in Ukraine ........................................... 147

6.3.1. Transformation ................................................................................... 148

6.3.2. A struggle for meaning ....................................................................... 151

6.3.3. Connection to real life ....................................................................... 155

6.3.4. Structured environment ..................................................................... 160

6.3.5. Limited flexibility ............................................................................... 164

6.3.6. Under-resourcing .............................................................................. 166

6.4. Chapter summary .................................................................................. 168

Chapter 7: Tasks in Ukrainian FLT: Current situation and teacher perceptions .................................................................................................................. 170

7.1. Overview ................................................................................................. 170

7.2. Current understanding of tasks in the field .......................................... 170
7.3. Teacher feedback on the TBLT presentation ........................................... 174

7.3.1. Student needs ......................................................................................... 175
7.3.2. Language ............................................................................................... 178
7.3.3. Teacher and student roles................................................................. 183
7.3.4. Resources ............................................................................................. 186
7.3.5. Task-like activities ............................................................................... 190

7.4. Chapter summary ..................................................................................... 192

Chapter 8: Case studies .................................................................................. 194

8.1. Overview .................................................................................................... 194

8.2. Teacher 1 ................................................................................................... 195

8.2.1. The teacher and the school ................................................................. 195
8.2.2. The classroom ...................................................................................... 197
8.2.3. Teaching materials .............................................................................. 197
8.2.4. Practices ............................................................................................... 200
8.2.5. Analysis and summary ....................................................................... 205

8.3. Teacher 2 ................................................................................................... 207

8.3.1. The teacher and the school ................................................................. 207
8.3.2. The classroom ...................................................................................... 209
8.3.3. Teaching materials .............................................................................. 209
8.3.4. Practices ............................................................................................... 211
8.3.5. Analysis and summary ....................................................................... 220

xii
8.4. Teacher 3 ........................................................................................................... 222
8.4.1. The teacher and the school ......................................................................... 222
8.4.2. The classroom .............................................................................................. 223
8.4.3. Teaching materials ....................................................................................... 223
8.4.4. Practices ........................................................................................................ 224
8.4.5. Analysis and summary .................................................................................. 233
8.5. Chapter summary ............................................................................................. 235

Chapter 9: Discussion ........................................................................................... 238

9.1. Overview ........................................................................................................... 238
9.2. Post-Soviet FLT context .................................................................................. 238
  9.2.1. FLT in Ukrainian schools: An overview ................................................. 238
  9.2.2. Contextualizing change in post-Soviet FLT ........................................... 242
  9.2.3. TBLT components in the current FLT in Ukraine ................................. 246
  9.2.4. Locally identified need for change ........................................................... 248
9.3. Potential benefits of TBLT for post-Soviet schools: Addressing the needs
  ............................................................................................................................... 249
  9.3.1. Communicative competence ................................................................. 249
  9.3.2. Connection to real life ............................................................................ 251
  9.3.3. Learner-centred classroom .................................................................... 252
  9.3.4. Student-student cooperation ................................................................. 253
  9.3.5. Motivation and engagement .................................................................. 254
List of Tables

Table 3.1.   Settings of TBLT implementation 37
Table 3.2.   Countries of TBLT implementation 37
Table 3.3.   Contextual factors of implementation at macro and micro levels 44
Table 4.1.   The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 1 81
Table 4.2.   The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 2 89
Table 4.3.   The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 3 93
Table 5.1.   FLs among other subjects in the school curriculum (hours per week) 106
Table 7.1.   Classification of learning activities in Ukrainian FLT 171
Table 8.1.   Lesson 2 plan (Year ten students) 215
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Macro and micro context of the FLT in public schools in Ukraine</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>Design of the research study: Phases</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3</td>
<td>Design of the research study: Four steps</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4</td>
<td>The TBLT framework for case selection</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>A typical classroom layout</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>Phase 1 interview questions</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Examples of translation of the chosen quotes into English</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>Phase 2 focus-group interview questions</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>TBLT presentation outline</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Phase 3 case study interview questions</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td>Participant Information Form and Consent Form samples</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7</td>
<td>Stuffed toys as a visual aid in the primary school classroom</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8</td>
<td>Handwriting samples</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9</td>
<td>A photo of the classroom with student-produced posters on the wall</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 10</td>
<td>Project work submissions</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11</td>
<td>A sample of the activity card</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 12</td>
<td>Headlines for the news reports prepared by students</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEFR</td>
<td>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLT</td>
<td>Foreign Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Means Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science (of Ukraine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Needs Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Present-Practice- Produce model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBLT</td>
<td>Task-Based Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

With ever increasing and rapid globalization (Gunn, 2004) there is a push for change in the economy, politics, culture, and social life of countries around the world. Because of the need to prepare their citizens with the skills and confidence to participate and compete in the international arena, inevitably globalization has also impacted upon education in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, it has prompted governments to reform education in order to ensure international competitiveness, such as through improvement in resource management, teacher professional development, and educational practices (Carnoy, 1999). On the other hand, such reforms can turn out differently from the way they are planned and sometimes even lead to the decline in the quality of education instead of improvement (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Gunn, 2004).

Negative outcomes may result from “ignoring differences in contextual capacity and culture” of each country (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p. 6; Niyozov & Dastambuev, 2013; Shaw, 2004) and from overlooking the unique historical processes that have shaped their education (e.g., Silova, 2010). They may also be a consequence of the imposition of “too much change in too short a time” (Toffler, 1970, as cited in Gunn, 2004, p. 5). Indeed, with the rush to globalize education there is a risk contextual factors may become either secondary issues, or even be overlooked altogether. In fact, there is a growing scepticism about cross-cultural transfer of educational ideas and approaches (e.g., Carless & Harfitt, 2013; Carr, 2003; Holliday, 1994a; Rodwell, 1998; Shaw, 2004).

This situation is especially evident in post-communist countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union. These societies experienced a significant change at the end of the twentieth century when the communist regimes collapsed and a number of newly independent states emerged. The expectation was that under the influence of globalization these countries would adopt Western practices to replace those developed previously. However, these countries have their own historical education
legacies that are not necessarily in need of change (Perry, 2009; Silova, 2010). Moreover, there has been the risk that in countries that are used to the Communist Party rule, globalization may simply replace one top-down form of educational practice with another (Niyozov & Dastambuev, 2013) instead of developing their own capacity for innovation. It does seem that there is a need to empower local professionals to be owners of change and draw inspiration from the past and/or the present, and the East and/or the West – depending on what they perceive as potentially beneficial for them.

Of key relevance to the current study is that the fall of the communist regimes and of the Soviet Union in particular led to replacement of the Russian language by English as the target language to be studied in schools. This has occurred because of its role as the international lingua franca (Ustinova, 2005). Although English and other foreign languages (FL) were taught in the Soviet Union before 1991 (e.g., Muckle, 1988; Tarnopolsky, 2000), with the push for globalization there appears to be an urgent need to reform language education to cater for the demands of the new social realities.

In Ukraine, a former Soviet country where the present study is set, educational reform has been ongoing since 1991 (Fimyar, 2010; Kutsyuruba, 2011; Kuzio, 2003). Foreign language teaching (FLT) in schools is one of the priority areas of this reform (Goodman, 2009; Mitter, 1992). The Ukrainian authorities support the development of FL competence for the majority of the population, and see it as being crucial for the “integration of the country into the world community and the international economy” aiming at “protecting and developing an independent Ukraine” (Tarnopolsky, 1996, p. 616). More recently, new FLT syllabuses were developed for schools based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), and the State Standard of Primary Education (MOES, 2011b). Again of key relevance to this research is that English has been established as a compulsory subject in all Ukrainian schools starting from year one. Moreover, 2016 was announced as the year of the English language (The President of Ukraine, 2015). At the same time, the existing evidence available in the published literature suggests that at present FLT in Ukrainian schools does not deliver the
desirable outcomes, although it must be acknowledged that there is a dearth of research in this area (Smotrova, 2009; Tarnopolsky, 1996). Further, research suggests that some aspects of Ukrainian education still reflect Soviet educational practices (Bogachenko & Perry, 2015; Koshmanova & Ravchyna, 2008; Smotrova, 2009). Thus further empirical data are needed to inform the educational reforms in this country, particularly the development of FLT, to meet the goals set by the government.

Currently Ukrainian FLT policies are informed by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). This document promotes the use of tasks which are, in turn, taken from a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach, one that might be useful for the local FLT context. TBLT has a strong theoretical, pedagogical and philosophical foundation and these days is being widely applied and researched in various places around the world. However, there is a risk that under the pressure of globalization if it is introduced into the newly independent states in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, this may occur too fast. This is particularly concerning as at present there is little research on how local FLT is conducted and thus there is a lack of foundational understanding to enable appropriate adjustments.

Despite these concerns there are a number of potential benefits of TBLT that stem from its inherent characteristics. As an educational innovation, it was developed to address the concerns associated with traditional and widely used approaches such as grammar-translation, audio-lingualism and communicative language teaching. One of its advantages is that it is informed by contemporary theory about the processes of second language acquisition (Brandle, 2008; Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1996a). In this approach, task is used as the main tool to elicit learners’ language and facilitate a primary focus on meaning rather than linguistic forms in communication (Widdowson, 1998). In contrast to the synthetic approaches that are based on teaching separate language items, tasks are “holistic, functional and communicative” (Van den Branden, 2006, p. 5). Having a capacity to combine focus on meaning with requisite need to also focus on language form, TBLT can enable language teachers to effectively develop not only their students’ fluency and complexity, but also accuracy through the use of communicative tasks (Ellis, 2000). The development of
tasks is informed by Needs Analysis (NA) of the learners (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2005b; Nunan, 2004; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Skehan, 1996a). As a result, these are believed to endorse authenticity (Nunan, 2004) and learner-centeredness (Van den Branden, 2006). With students acting as language users rather than language learners (Nunan, 2004), TBLT is also argued to increase the use of a FL (Willis, 1996) in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers can choose from a broad variety of tasks, and refer to the task-based syllabus for a wider picture of the learning process (Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 2004).

As such, TBLT may potentially provide a way to develop language teaching in post-Soviet countries like Ukraine in ways that address the needs created by globalization. However, to date no substantial attempts have been made to research this possibility. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of research in the Ukrainian FLT more generally. Therefore, it is not clear whether tasks can benefit this FLT context, and how this innovation can be contextualized if implementation does occur. This is the focus of the current research.

1.2. The research problem and the Research Questions

Two key problems are addressed in this study. First, there is a lack of empirical research about Ukrainian FLT and this is an obstacle to the development of strategies to address the language needs emanating from globalization and to do so in a way that would also be contextually appropriate. Hence, the present study aims to provide deeper understanding of those contextual factors relevant to post-Soviet society and of teacher perceptions about the local needs in FLT.

Second, given the contribution of European policies (i.e, the CEFR) to Ukrainian FLT, TBLT may potentially have a role to play and thus there is a need to examine how this can be done in a context-appropriate way. Doing so may overcome the numerous challenges identified in the literature concerning TBLT implementation (e.g., Adams & Newton, 2009; Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Brandle, 2008; Butler, 2011; Carless, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Ilin, Inözü, & Yumru, 2007; Lopes, 2004;
In order to do this, it is necessary to explore current FLT practices in post-Soviet Ukraine, and identify potential benefits and challenges related to the potential implementation of TBLT. Therefore, the study addresses the following Research Questions:

1. What are the current FLT curriculum and practices in schools in post-Soviet Ukraine?
2. Are there potential benefits of implementing TBLT in school FLT contexts in Ukraine?
3. What challenges are associated with the prospective implementation of TBLT in Ukrainian schools?

1.3. Significance of the study

The significance of the proposed study is fourfold. Firstly, as a result of the political changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the influence of globalization, teaching FLs is becoming increasingly important for the future of post-Soviet states and their citizens. This requires rigorous research of what is happening in language classrooms and what changes are needed to facilitate language acquisition, as well as the ways to effectively implement these changes. The present study is significant as it collected and analysed empirical data on the existing situation of FLT in public schools in Ukraine, an under-researched educational context.

One outcome of this research is recommendations for the local teachers, curriculum designers, and policy makers. It can also inform those concerned with the development of TBLT on the possibilities of implementation of this approach in post-Soviet schools in Ukraine. In addition, qualitative research, and particularly that informed by critical ethnography, has a potential to challenge the widely-held assumptions and stereotypes that have developed in local policies over extended periods of time (Lamarre, 2013). This can then inform future research in education.
and FLT in the region, facilitate a more contextualized interpretation of the data, and prompt political actions on the issues uncovered in such research. Indeed, as Markee (1997, p. 7, emphasis in the original) argues, “language teaching will benefit greatly if language teaching professionals develop their own critically informed tradition of innovation research and practice.”

While the emerging recommendations will be context-specific, they may generate principles applicable for the contextualization of change in other places, including those that share a degree of similarity with the schools in Kyiv Region, Ukraine where this study took place. On this basis, recommendations can also be made for TBLT implementation in other FLT contexts.

Secondly, although there is a growing interest in the implementation of TBLT around the world, there appear to be few if any studies undertaken in post-Soviet countries, thus this study explores TBLT in a new location. It provides data that can be compared to those found in other settings, and thus creates an opportunity to discover issues that may have been previously overlooked.

Thirdly, while TBLT research in other countries has been carried out after implementation, the proposed research follows a different path, namely it is a pre-implimentational study. Such an approach provides a unique angle in which to investigate potential benefits and challenges of TBLT implementation. In this way it also can inform context-sensitive or ecological methods for future innovations. Thus, the empirical data collected in this study provides further evidence for innovation theory.

Finally, despite the risk of bias, a study undertaken by a researcher native to the context (as occurs in the current research) provides a unique insight. As Holliday indicates, “innovation can only be effectively managed by insiders” (Holliday, 1994a, p. 46). It is especially significant because empirical research was not supported by the Soviet government (Mitter, 1992), and even nowadays little research is taking place in this region for a number of economic and socio-political reasons (Gorobets, 2011; Kutsyuruba, 2011; Tarnopolsky, 2000). Therefore,
engaging local researchers and other stakeholders is an important milestone in the establishment of research tradition in this part of the world.

1.4. Organisation of the thesis

This thesis consists of ten chapters.

Chapter 1 has provided the background for the study and explained how the research problem and objectives stem from the issues related to globalization and educational change in general, change processes in post-Soviet settings, and TBLT implementation in particular. It has also explained the significance of the research, and provides a guide to the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2 outlines the context in which the present study was undertaken. It includes an overview of social and educational issues and reforms in Soviet and post-Soviet eras, with a particular focus on Ukraine. It also examines the role of languages in independent Ukraine and current views on FLT in that country. Previous studies that have focused on Ukrainian education and FLT in particular are also reviewed and the need for further research explained.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed review of the relevant literature. First, it focuses on the history and features of TBLT as a teaching approach, its use in the classroom and in the curriculum. The summary of this first section forms a framework for the choice of three case studies which were conducted in the last phase of this study. Second, the literature on change management in education is discussed from the position of an ecological approach to innovation. Third, an overview of NA and possible methodological options to study the context of implementation is provided in section three. The final summary leads to the Research Questions.

Chapter 4 describes the research method used in this study. It explains in detail the research paradigm, conceptualization of the context, the research design and three phases of the study. Each phase is described in terms of the location, participants, materials used, and procedures of data collection and analysis. Finally, the chapter outlines the quality control mechanisms and ethical issues pertinent to this study.
The findings of the study are described in Chapters 5-8. Specifically, Phase 1 findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, providing a thick description of the Ukrainian FLT curriculum and practices respectively. Phase 2 findings are presented in Chapter 7 and these focus on tasks and TBLT in the local FLT. In particular, this chapter examines the use of the term task in current FLT in Ukraine and reports on teachers’ feedback on the TBLT presentation they attended in this phase. In Chapter 8 Phase 3 findings are described in the form of three Case Studies that illustrate, further contextualize, and elaborate those issues presented in the previous findings chapters.

Chapter 9 discusses the answers to the Research Questions. In the first part of this chapter, the key features of the post-Soviet FLT context in Ukraine as identified in this study are discussed. This is followed by an outline of the features that need to be considered if an innovation such as TBLT is to be implemented. The second part of the chapter describes the potential benefits of TBLT for Ukrainian schools. The final part provides a discussion of the potential challenges of task implementation with a reference to how some of these were addressed (or not) in other contexts.

Finally, Chapter 10 concludes this thesis. It provides an explanation of the scope and principal limitations of the study. It also summarises main points of the discussion, outlines implications and recommendations for theory and practice, and ends with suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2: Background

2.1. Overview

According to Kutsyuruba (2011, p. 290), “reforms in education cannot be understood without making sense of the environment or larger societal contexts in which they operate.” The present study was undertaken in post-Soviet schools in the capital region of Kyiv, Ukraine. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was “difficult, if not totally impossible, [to get] access to primary resources and fieldwork” for research purposes in education (Mitter, 1992, p. 19). Since perestroika (re-structuring though political reforms including glasnost, or “openness,” which allowed for freedom of speech) in the 1980s and a regime change in the early 1990s, there has been an ever growing interest in Soviet and then post-communist schooling. However, despite the increased access to information, post-Soviet education remains under-researched and underrepresented in the literature. This chapter outlines the setting for the current study by providing a description about the history of post-Soviet education and the educational trends in post-Soviet Ukraine, with a special focus on FLT.

2.2. Post-Soviet education: A historical perspective

Established in 1922, the Soviet Union existed for almost seven decades and incorporated fifteen countries in total, occupying a considerable part of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Soviet rule was characterised by “a closed society, a command economy and a one-party state” (Tomiak, 1992, p. 19). Social, economic, political, and educational policies and practices were shaped by the ideology of the Communist Party. The separation from the rest of the world was reinforced by strong criticism of the ideas developed outside the Communist Block and a ban on any migration in or outside these countries (Kaser & Phillips, 1992).

This political regime impacted on the development of pedagogy as a science, with previous educational practices obliterated, and instead a Marxist-Leninist ideology was incorporated (Atlantova, 1981). The overarching goal of Soviet schooling was to
produce “the new Communist Man” (Tomiak, 1992, p. 21). Compared to other countries in Europe that experienced a communist influence after World War II, where the contemporary European education was adjusted gradually, in the Soviet Union this change was radical (Mitter, 1992). In the 1930s, ideas popular in Western education were banned not only because they were deemed “bourgeois,” but also because they were actually designated as being wrong (Anweiler, 1992). The state not only provided education, but also exerted total control over it (Muckle, 1988). Although there were some positive developments, such as compulsory schooling for all and tuition free education (Ross, 1960; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003), the focus of the educational system was on industrial development (Mitter, 1992). As a consequence, the school curriculum was uniform throughout the Soviet Union and it catered for the needs of the state (Ross, 1960) – not the individual – with a strict top-down way of implementing changes (Kaser & Phillips, 1992). The production of textbooks was monopolised by the state, and emphasis was on “the acquisition of factual knowledge in highly specialised subjects and little room was left for individual pedagogical initiatives” (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003, p. 18). This system helped sustain high levels of ideological indoctrination and centralization of decision-making (Chabe, 1970).

By the 1980s, however, the need for change in the educational system was acknowledged by the Soviet educational officials (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003). In this way, reform that aimed to reduce the centralization and the uniformity of the school system began prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the communist rule in 1991 allowed for even greater changes than had been initially planned. The main feature of these early reforms was “the negation and removal of past practices” (Bain, 2010, p. 28). Among the key changes targeted in the post-communist countries were such things as the omission of ideological content, promotion of intellectual freedom and pluralism of ideas, decentralization, and the increasing flexibility of the educational system. To facilitate these and to enable education to become internationally competitive, new standards for school, university, and vocational education were seen as needed (Mitter, 1992, pp. 23-24).
As a consequence, two strategic directions for educational reform were instigated in the region. One was reviving the local pedagogy that existed before the Soviet period, and the other involved the use of Western educational ideas (Sidorovitch, 2005). Anweiler (1992, p. 37) labelled these directions as “return to the roots” and “borrowing from abroad.” Similarly, Mitter (1992, p. 25) referred to these trends as a combination of a “retrospect” and a “prospect.” In this way, a balance was attempted between traditional practices – as a way to restore countries’ identities in both socio-cultural and political realms – and consideration of progressive practices in Europe (Mitter, 1992). Thus, post-Soviet education and other spheres of post-Soviet society developed as a combination of old and new structures, which is a common feature of states undergoing rapid change (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003, p. 29).

There were, of course, many challenges in the reform process. Bain (2010, p. 40) describes a number of constraints that impacted upon the enactment of educational reform, such as: “depopulation, shortage of funding for education, the deterioration of the teaching profession, and the hardships … of the large-scale societal change,” as well as “political muddling, weakened state institutions, nascent civil societies, and downward spiralling socioeconomic decline, the uncertainty of the possibility for improvement.” In addition to the economic, political and social hardships that underpinned this time of change, one significant drawback, especially for education, was the absence of adequate research. For instance, Kutsyuruba (2011, p. 288) claims that despite the opportunities to do so in the absence of the political restrictions, no “extensive research on transformations within the realm of education” has taken place. This lack of research can be attributed to financial constraints of public educational establishments (Tarnopolsky, 2000) and the absence of skilled staff able to conduct research at an international level (Gorobets, 2011). This situation was further exacerbated by corruption and the lack of adequate governance of research initiatives (Gorobets, 2011). As a result, practices that could improve education, and relevant to this study – language education, such as teaching writing for communicative purposes (Tarnopolsky, 2000), were not researched and thus could not be used to inform development post 1991.
Although all post-Soviet countries experienced the general trends of the reform mentioned above to some extent, they did follow different pathways of development and change due to their individual characteristics and internal features (Bain, 2010; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003). The next section describes the changes in one of these countries, namely Ukraine, and in particular those related to education and languages.

2.3. **Ukraine as a post-Soviet country**

Ukraine is geographically located in Eastern Europe. It borders Russia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, and Belarus. Having gained independence in 1991, Ukraine became the second largest country in Europe with a population of over 50 million people. Although its population had experienced a significant decline to 42.7 million by 2016 (Ukrainian State Bureau of Statistics, 2016), its size, location, and historical ties to both Europe and Central Asia make this country an important player in the international arena. The following provides an overview of the way educational change unfolded in Ukraine after independence, and explains the significant role of languages in this process.

2.3.1. **Educational reforms in post-Soviet Ukraine**

In the 1990s there was a strong need for educational reform in the newly independent Ukraine. According to Kutsyuruba (2011, p. 287), “education, like Ukrainian society in general, was caught amid a transition from totalitarian Marxist-Leninist ideology to democracy and pluralism,” and reforms were needed at different levels of education, as well as in the professional training of teaching staff. These new policies focused on restructuring, democratization, the removal of authoritarian teaching practices, and the removal of uniformity and state monopoly within education (Janmaat, 2008). The overall goals were:

- to bring Ukraine’s education to world levels;
- to revive Ukraine’s original national character;
- to fully renew the content, forms and methods of education as well as its organisational structure;
- to enrich Ukraine’s
intellectual potential and the well-being of its citizens; to bring its economy and science to higher levels. (UNESCO, 2011, p. 2)

Indeed, there is evidence of a number of developments that have taken place since that time in the educational system of independent Ukraine. Specifically, the democratization of education enabled the possibility for teacher initiatives (e.g. the use of additional materials), provision of optional hours for schooling (which are decided upon by individual schools), and the emergence of a variety of optional educational courses (Janmaat, 2008). These initiatives reflect not only changes instigated by policy development in Ukraine, but also the impact of globalization and the need to move towards European standards in education. They are also a consequence of the establishment of private educational institutions in Ukraine, which grew out of the needs of a globalized economy (Janmaat, 2008). In fact, Kuzio (2003, p. 7) argues that “Ukraine is the only CIS¹ state with a large pro-Western reform movement.”

At the same time, it has been claimed by many that Ukrainian educational reform is ongoing and a number of substantial changes have yet to take place. For instance, Kutsyuruba (2011) argues that many educational practices have been retained from the communist times. There is also a tendency of the Ukrainian government to draft numerous documents without providing further support to enable the change to occur (Kuzio, 2003, p. 18). This situation is further exacerbated by the challenges related to the low prestige and inadequate social support of the teaching profession, leading to a decrease in the numbers of teachers and the quality of education (Fimyar, 2010).

Another reason for the inertia of educational change might be the continuing centralization of decision-making following the Soviet tradition (Janmaat, 2008). Today, educational policies are drafted by the government and specifically by the MOES. These policies are comprehensive and apply to all public as well as private

¹ CIS stands for the Commonwealth of Independent States that incorporates the majority of the countries of the former Soviet Union. Ukraine holds a status of an associate state in CIS.
schools that provide general secondary education. For instance, the content of education outlined by the *State Standard for Secondary School* developed by the MOES is the same for all students throughout the country (MOES, 2011a, p. 4). The scope of the MOES’s control is demonstrated in the following description of its responsibilities:²

The MES performs analysis and forecasts future developments, regulates the network of State educational institutions and elaborates the normative and legislative basis of their activity. … The ministry also elaborates State requirements and standards on content and levels of education, on typical educational plans and programmes. It organizes the preparation and publication of textbooks and teaching aids, and determines the terms by which pupils are admitted to educational institutions. (UNESCO, 2011, p. 4)

As a result of this, schools and teachers in Ukraine have little control over the educational process. For example, Kutsyuruba (2011, p. 288) claims that “Notably missing from the literature are the voices of teachers – unarguably one of the groups most significantly and directly affected by post-Soviet reforms in elementary and secondary education…” He goes on to list the various challenges teachers in Ukraine face, including low salaries, a large number of reforms, increased workload, and lack of resources. Together, these challenges may contribute to teachers’ resistance to take up innovations and also to the lack of time they have for professional development – which in turn impacts negatively on the educational process and outcomes (Kutsyuruba, 2011). Also contributing to this situation is the way teacher education is organized (Koshmanova & Ravchyna, 2008), specifically that there has not been a significant change in content and approach to educating teachers in post-Soviet Ukraine. One example of this is a teacher-education textbook in Pedagogy that provides practitioners with predetermined ideas rather than stimulating a discussion on educational issues. It also lacks practical instructions about how exactly change in teaching can occur in the areas where it is promoted by the government (Bogachenko & Perry, 2015).

² Original in English.
In light of the recent political events in Ukraine, where there has been political and economic turmoil in the south and east of the country, inefficiency of current reforms in various areas of Ukrainian society has become even more evident, pointing to the need for urgent action (Dabrowski, 2014). As K. D. Brown (2013) indicates, education can serve as a way to help the country get through these difficult times. A key part of this process of reform through education lies with the role of language, as described below.

2.3.2. Languages in post-Soviet Ukraine

The issue of language has been of special significance for post-Soviet Ukraine (as well as for most post-Soviet and post-communist countries). This is because in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Ukraine underwent several periods of Russification (Goodman, 2009), which is “the promulgation of the Russian language as the sole language of public life” (p. 20). One of the most influential of these took place in the late 1930s under the government of Joseph Stalin, when the Russian language was legally enforced as the language of schooling in all the countries within the communist regime irrespective of their national language (Anweiler, 1992, p. 30). When the totalitarian regime eventually dissolved, two major discourses related to language and its role in formal schooling emerged. The first was related to the identity construction within the framework of nation building, and the other to globalization and an increasing interest in international cooperation.

The rise of nationalist movements in the newly independent states had a significant influence on education (Mitter, 1992). After years of Russification, the majority of post-Soviet states focused on raising the status of their national (titular) language (K. D. Brown, 2013, p. 239) as a means of re-constructing national identity. Ukraine was not an exception. In fact, the Ukrainian language became an official language in Ukraine two years before the fall of the Soviet Union – in 1989 when it was still the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. This status was then confirmed by the Constitution of the independent Ukraine in 1996 (Bilaniuk, 2003). At the same time, while the official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking
citizens form almost equal groups in the population meaning that this country is in reality bilingual (Janmaat, 2008).

With globalization, the new school curriculum now focuses on the study of European languages (such as English, French, and German) giving them priority over Russian, which further strengthens the “‘Western’ orientation” of educational reform (Mitter, 1992). Language studies have been further supported by the increased attention to humanities, including the arts and social sciences, in post-Soviet education (Sidorovitch, 2005). As a result, both “mother-tongue and FLT have (re-) gained high relevance in educational policies” (Mitter, 1992, p. 24). The next section explores the role of FLT in Ukraine.

2.4. The role of foreign language teaching (FLT) in Ukraine

There is no doubt that in contemporary Ukraine the importance of FLs and a desire to learn them are growing. Evidence suggests that among the population who do not speak Ukrainian (i.e., the national language), it is more popular to learn English than Ukrainian (Goodman, 2009). This can be attributed to the fact that FL skills, and especially English language proficiency, provide certain advantages. For students it can enhance career opportunities, including outside Ukraine. For the various authorities, it offers a way to increase the competitiveness of the Ukrainian education in the international market (Smotrova, 2009). For businesses and companies, it provides an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in other countries and, therefore, to integrate into the international economy (Tarnopolsky, 1996). There are also cultural gains to be achieved given that language proficiency, especially in English, can be a means to gaining better experiences from travel.

For governmental authorities, the development of competence in English by the majority of the population is deemed highly important. They see it as a way to facilitate the “integration of the country into the world community and the international economy,” whilst aiming at “protecting and developing an independent Ukraine,” which is “impossible without many people who have a good mastery of foreign languages, especially English” (Tarnopolsky, 1996, p. 616). To achieve this
important goal, it has been acknowledged that the standards of language teaching in Ukraine need to be raised. To this end, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* (Council of Europe, 2001) has been employed as a foundation for the development of national language teaching policies, with a particular focus on communicative language teaching (Smotrova, 2009). In addition, it has been acknowledged that there is a need to upgrade FL teachers’ skills by encouraging them to take part in professional development courses (MOES, 2014a).

A number of the most recently developed policies, both in general education and subject-specific ones, draw considerable attention to FLs and their teaching. *State National Program “Education (Ukraine of the 21st century)“,* for example, places a special emphasis on FLT within the framework for educational reform and development of Ukraine in the 21st century (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 1993). Further, the *State Standard of Primary Education* (MOES, 2011b) has established English as a compulsory subject in all Ukrainian schools beginning from year one. Furthermore, 2016 was proclaimed to be the year of the English language by the Order No. 641/2015 (The President of Ukraine, 2015). It includes such measures as courses for graduate students and government officials, teaching English as a compulsory subject in all schools, organization of language camps, competitions, the promotion of the use of English in the media and in official governmental policies, and the recruitment of native English speaking teachers. In addition, the draft law for education planned to be enacted later in 2016 further declares that the teaching of languages for “international communication” will be supported and promoted by the state and that competence in these languages will be compulsory for graduates, that the use of these languages as a medium of instruction will be promoted, and that support for an upgrade in language knowledge of teaching and research staff will be appropriately financed (MOES, 2015c, p. 7).

Despite the high regard given to FLs in Ukraine, the quality of instruction in public educational institutions remains questionable. For example, Tarnopolsky (1996) found in his study in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine that only 20.7% of students could use English in some way even after eight to nine years of formal instruction in schools, while others appeared to have no communicative competence whatsoever. He also
describes the inability of public educational establishments to provide quality instruction suggesting this occurs for a variety of reasons, economic or otherwise, and that this has led to the boom of the private market offering FL instruction. Similarly, Smotrova (2009, p. 729) found that 50% of students who come to study at her university in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine are at the beginner level of FL proficiency, with only a quarter of them at the pre-intermediate level (A1 and A2 levels of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) respectively). This suggests that school students are not always provided with sufficient FL support, with challenges increasing when students undertake mandatory ESP instruction at university. This might also explain why students coming from such schools to study in Western countries find it difficult to adjust. For instance, in their study of student beliefs about language learning utilizing interviews, questionnaires and observations, Gvozdenko and Bernat (2011) found that international students who came to Australia from various post-Soviet countries preferred a learning approach that was “often incongruent with current language teaching approaches in Australia …. putting emphasis on learning grammar, pronunciation, and practising and repeating with cassettes and tapes” (p. 46).

Increasing the quality of FL instruction in Ukraine, however, is not an easy task. Koshmanova and Ravchyna (2008) interviewed teacher educators in one of the Ukrainian universities and found that they held conservative views about teaching, resisting change and holding on to the Soviet-era stereotypes such as authoritarian teacher-centred approaches. This is not surprising given that many current teachers received their training in grammar-translation and have had no opportunities to learn alternatives, with many still widely resorting to techniques such as repetition and rote memorisation (Smotrova, 2009). Furthermore, the centralization and standardization of the curriculum may serve to discourage teachers from trying alternative FLT methods and implementing innovative pedagogical practices. It might also drive students to private courses that are able to offer better conditions, new materials and approaches, and flexible courses (Tarnopolsky, 1996). Finally, the economic crises that Ukraine has experienced in the post-Soviet period has resulted in financial cuts to education, lower teacher salaries and teacher shortages, and limited opportunities
for travel which together have made teachers’ work more difficult (Tarnopolsky, 1996).

Empirical research in Ukrainian schools is needed to understand the current discrepancy between the strong support for FLT given by the government and the limited nature of actual change. There is also very little research on the current attempts to reform education in Ukraine. One of the few such endeavours is a report on the project concerning FL textbook writing for Ukrainian schools (Katz, Byrkun, & Sullivan, 2008). The project centred around a colloquium on textbook writing and involved international consultants and local experts in the development of new guidelines for textbook writers in Ukraine. Although the project achieved its aim of empowering local professionals by providing knowledge, collaboration and opportunities for change, ultimately the new guidelines were not implemented because of a lack of contextualization. In particular, it appeared to be impossible for the participants to translate the new guidelines, which were written in English, in a way whereby they could be encompassed within the existing Ukrainian policy discourse. This experience points to the need for exploratory research in this educational context to examine how successful reforms might be achieved in the future.

2.5. Chapter summary

The present study was undertaken in public schools in Kyiv city and region in Ukraine, a post-Soviet state. This educational context has a Soviet legacy characterised by centralized decision-making, views of teaching as knowledge transmission, uniformity of schools and teaching materials, distancing from the “Western” pedagogic systems and ideas, and orientation to the state rather than individual needs. Since 1991 Ukraine, alongside other post-Soviet states, has attempted to abolish the supremacy of communist ideology in all aspects of life and to adopt a dual direction for educational reform. On the one hand, it has focused on national revival through the processes of nation building, including patriotic education in schools and establishment of the Ukrainian language as an official language of the government and the main language of instruction. On the other hand,
it has adopted a pro-European orientation through a number of initiatives, one of the key ones being the increased importance given to FL studies. In the last decade, FLs and especially English seem to have gained a particularly high value at different levels of Ukrainian society, raising its status as a subject in schools. This is evident in the increased share of the curriculum time allotted for FLT, promotion and support of FLs in the key national policies, and a number of initiatives outlined in the framework related to the year of the English language (The President of Ukraine, 2015).

Despite the important role of FLs in Ukrainian reforms and the increased interest in language study among its population, a variety of constraints have restricted their implementation. These include economic, political and social factors. There is also a lack of adequate research into education in this region. As a result, little is known about the actual level and practices of FLT in Ukrainian schools. This also means that the reforms undertaken to date have not been informed by sufficient research. This study is an attempt to address this issue by collecting and analysing empirical data from Ukrainian FLT classrooms.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1. Overview

The chapter consists of three sections. The first section (3.2) provides an outline of the theoretical, empirical, and philosophical foundations of TBLT, and describes the use of tasks in classroom learning and educational planning. The final part of this section addresses challenges of TBLT implementation for different educational settings. Section two (3.3) then analyses the literature on change management especially in relation to how these challenges can be tackled and examines the features of context-appropriate implementation of educational innovations. The third section (3.4) provides an overview of methodological options for research that can address these features. Finally, the Chapter Summary presents a conceptual framework for the current study based on this literature review.

3.2. Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Although the impetus for FLT appears to have grown in recent times, FLs as a means of international communication has been a pedagogical focus for centuries. Historical accounts of language teaching show changing views on the purpose and nature of language acquisition. First, this section explains the origin of TBLT as a language teaching approach and the reasons for its increasing uptake internationally, that is, the motivation for the current study. It then focuses on the key features of TBLT within the classroom and curriculum. The final part examines issues related to TBLT implementation in a variety of contexts, with a specific focus on challenges reported in FLT settings.

3.2.1. The development of FLT

The history of FLT dates back to the Middle Ages when attempts were made to find effective ways to teach Latin as a lingua franca (Savignon, 2007). However, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that languages were included as an academic subject in the university curriculum, and later widely adopted by public
schools. Language teaching in schools initially targeted intellectual development rather than the ability to use a language in communication. Classical languages such as Latin and Greek were taught with the aim of “training for the mind, an exercise in logical thought” (Savignon, 2007, p. 208). A teaching approach called grammar-translation was used for this purpose and required learners to learn grammar rules and translate written texts according to these rules. However, the reasons for learning the so-called “modern languages” (e.g., German) differed from the academic reasons for learning Latin and Greek. Students needed to be able to use the target language for communication not just for the intellectual development.

New approaches that were developed to match the changing purposes of language teaching also reflected understandings about the process of language acquisition at the time. One of them is known as the audio-lingual approach and is rooted in behaviourist and structuralist ideas – its aim was to develop habits of correct language use through drilling. This approach reflected the belief that language should be taught as a set of structures, sounds and words (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Later, a combination of these behaviourist ideas and structural-situational teaching gave rise to the PPP model (a present-practice-produce sequence) (Harmer, 2007) which was first used in the approach called Situational Language Teaching (Richards, 2006, p. 8). The PPP combined the presentation or modelling of the correct forms (with main focus on accuracy) by the teacher and practicing through drills to form habits (presentation and practice) with one more step that required students to practise by using the language they were presented with in new situations (production).

Since then, PPP has been widely used by the teachers around the world (Richards, 2006) and is sometimes referred to as a “traditional approach” (e.g., Skehan, 1996b). It is appealing to teachers as it provides them with the opportunity to be in control of the language classroom and made the learning process quite predictable (Ellis, 2003). However, this model has been criticized on the grounds that presentation of linguistic structures before language production affects language use by focusing students’ attention on the linguistic form rather than on the meaning they wanted to communicate (Willis & Willis, 2007).
As understanding about language learning progressed, by the 1970s the need to develop communicative competence for effective use of language was recognised. According to H. D. Brown (2007, p. 227), communicative competence is the “aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts.” This realisation motivated researchers and educators to question methods used at that time and move towards an approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT aims to develop learners’ ability to use language meaningfully and appropriately in a range of situations. Tied to this is the notion of relevance and the aim of providing practice for real-life situations (Allwright, 1995), including social interaction.

### 3.2.2. From communicative to task-based language teaching

As CLT spread, two types were distinguished: a weak and a strong form (East, 2015; Willis, 2004). Weak CLT still followed the PPP model described above, but with the focus on communicative competence: after the language structure was introduced, explained, and practised or drilled, time was given for more authentic activities that entailed free language use. Although all three stages were given equal importance, learners were still expected to learn the structure they had just been taught and reproduce it immediately in the free production stage (i.e., following a behaviouristic approach). In response to this type of teaching where little difference to behaviourist approaches was apparent, the strong type of CLT developed. This latter model omitted the first two steps and instead promoted language use without any explicit explanation of language form. Some examples of such communicative approaches are the Natural Approach to language teaching and immersion programs where target language use is primary.

Despite its merits, over the years CLT has been a target of criticism. Specifically, it was claimed that the shift from the focus on language form to the focus on meaning led to the development of fluency at the expense of accuracy (Richards, 2006). In addition, an absence of universal standards and a widely accepted definition of language proficiency were obstacles for the adequate assessment of learners in CLT classrooms (Brandle, 2008). Finally, though CLT was tailored to meet the need for
meaningful language use, it was found difficult to implement in diverse contexts, particularly where traditional teaching approaches were strongly entrenched (McKay, 2002). In response to these claims, new methodologies were developed, including content-based instruction, problem-based learning and, of particular relevance to the current study, task-based language teaching (TBLT) which is reflected in the CEFR, which in turn informs the Ukrainian FL curriculum.

As a successor of the strong form of CLT (Willis, 2004), the primary focus of TBLT is on language with an emphasis on meaning rather than on practising and drilling language structures. TBLT tasks are claimed to be “compelling and appropriate means for realising certain characteristic principles of communicative language teaching and learning” (Candlin, 2009, p. 21). However, TBLT has its own distinct features grounded in theory, empirical research, and philosophies of education.

To start with, TBLT is underpinned by our current understanding of how languages are learned as based on both research and practice. Willis (2004) distinguishes three main premises for TBLT: 1) understanding that language learning is not a linear process, and that both 2) comprehensible input, and 3) comprehensible output are necessary for language learning to occur. The first premise acknowledges research findings showing that language acquisition does not reflect the traditional pedagogy whereby the various elements of language are learned to perfection one by one. Instead, language learning happens in a complex and rather sporadic way. The second premise is based on the Input Hypothesis developed by Krashen (1985) – that is, in order to learn a SL or FL, students need to have access to comprehensible input. Language input is seen as comprehensible if, even though challenged, students understand it. Further, by engaging interactionally, such as through negotiating for meaning, learners have the opportunity to make the input they receive comprehensible. At the same time, learners should be exposed to a variety of language styles in various contexts, and again this may occur through interaction. On this basis, TBLT can potentially provide richer linguistic data than more traditional approaches and materials, especially through the use of input-based tasks (Ellis, 2009a).
Based on evidence, such as that from immersion programs, it is claimed that comprehensible input on its own is not sufficient for language acquisition, and what is also necessary is comprehensible output, whereby students are “pushed” to produce a message that is both linguistically and socially appropriate, thus comprehensible and appropriate (Swain, 2005, p. 473) – as proposed in the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 2005). Thus, the need for learners to process the input they received and produce output is the third premise of TBLT (Willis, 2004). It also builds further upon the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), according to which interaction mediates learning through the possibility for negative feedback and scaffolding, whereby the stronger interlocutor “assists another in performing a new function” (Ellis, 2009b, p. 122).

Tasks are believed to provide the conditions in which these three premises can be met. Specifically, they motivate learners to process input and to produce output, and as Willis (1996) suggests, motivation is essential for successful language acquisition. Different ways and approaches to task definition will be dealt with later in Section 3.2.3.

Secondly, TBLT reflects current principles underpinning pedagogy (Nunan, 2004). In particular, it creates a context whereby attention can be given to the needs of learners, where connections can be made between life outside the classroom and students’ experiences, where the use of authentic materials are promoted, and where a focus on the process of learning rather than on content only can occur (Nunan, 2004, p. 1). In addition, TBLT reflects socio-cultural theory (Ellis, 2000). For instance, it strongly aligns with the idea that “learning arises not through interaction but in interaction” (Ellis, 2000, p. 209). TBLT also encompasses another key element of this theory, namely that teachers and learners are co-constructors of leaning activities (this is further discussed in Section 3.2.3 on teacher and student roles).

Thirdly, TBLT draws on well-established philosophies of education. One of the most influential of these being “experiential learning” or “learning by doing” developed by Dewey and Freinet (Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). As Nunan (2004, p. 12) explains:
An important conceptual basis for task-based language teaching is experiential learning. This approach takes the learner’s immediate personal experience as the point of departure for the learning experience. Intellectual growth occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks. The active involvement of the learner is therefore central... In this, it contrasts with a ‘transmission’ approach to education in which the learner acquires knowledge passively from the teacher.

Key to this is making a connection between the learners’ actual experience, school learning, and the practical application of what is taught to outside the classroom. Dewey believed that in this way education becomes personally and socially relevant according to the social milieu of the time. Learning is, therefore, a cyclical process – moving from learners’ experience to analysis of this experience, to the trial of the developed ideas in practice (Samuda & Bygate, 2008).

For Long (2015), the philosophy of “learning by doing” informs TBLT as it provides students with an opportunity to engage in or to prepare for real-world activities in a way that is more effective than reading about them in a book. In fact, the analysis of real-world needs and learning through experience is the very foundation of TBLT (Long, 2015).

Another educational philosophy reflected in TBLT is participatory education based on the work by Freire (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). According to Freire, education that treats learners as passive recipients of knowledge leads to their conformity with the status quo, which has serious social and political implications. Instead, learners need to act as participants in their learning. Such participation requires the problematizing of reality and the unveiling of problems and their causes, as well as a discussion of possible solutions. As a result, participatory education challenges the status quo and brings about transformation. Integrative components of such learning, according to Freire, are dialogue and action (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). In line with these ideas, Long (2015) emphasizes the nature of TBLT tasks that promote equality in the classroom. Further, he posits that TBLT supports individual freedoms and processes of emancipation by not imposing a pre-determined one-size-fits-all curriculum or set solutions to problems. Finally, he argues that enabling learners to effectively acquire
a language through the research-based and empirically supported approach provides them with better opportunities in life.

3.2.3. Tasks in the classroom

TBLT employs tasks as the main unit of instruction, syllabus design, and assessment. This subsection provides an overview of tasks from the perspective of the classroom, including the focus on form (FonF), the task cycle, and the roles assigned to teachers and students in this process.

Task features

At a general level, tasks are all the different activities that people do in their everyday life, such as writing emails, preparing meals, helping others, or watching TV (Long, 2015, p. 6). Long (2015) explains that these target tasks form the basis for what are called pedagogical tasks. In other words, they are transformed into activities that can be used in the classroom to achieve specific learning goals. There are a wide range of definitions of a task and these differ significantly, with some being incomplete or vague (Long, 2015; Van den Branden, 2006). Therefore, to better understand what a task is, task features as identified in the TBLT literature are described next. The five main features most commonly used to characterise tasks are that 1) they focus on meaning, 2) they have a goal-orientation, 3) they draw on students’ own resources rather than those pre-determined by others, 4) they create a motivational gap, and 5) they reflect real-life activities (e.g., Ellis, 2009a; Skehan, 1998; Van den Branden, 2006).

What distinguishes tasks from other activities is their orientation towards meaning (Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 2009a). This focus is manifested in the holistic nature of the task. In contrast to the drills and exercises that focus on one aspect of language at a time, be that a grammar structure, vocabulary, or phonetics, tasks combine these different aspects into natural language use that is focused on communication. In other words, “through engaging with the task, learners are led to work with and integrate
the different aspects of language for a larger purpose” (Samuda & Bygate, 2008, p. 8).

The focus on meaning creates a task orientation that is directed towards a communicative outcome. For Skehan (1998), tasks need to be outcome-evaluated, while Ellis (2009a) specifies that the outcome of the task is non-linguistic. This means that “the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right” (Ellis, 2009a, p. 223) as is the case with exercises. This also means that task assessment is performed as an evaluation of goal achievement, not accuracy. Thus the main criterion for assessment is whether the learner is capable of using the target language to achieve the goal of a task (Long & Norris, 2009). While this goal is non-linguistic, learners are required to use language to achieve it (Van den Branden, 2006). In order to engage students in the process of goal achievement and to motivate their participation and the use of language, there has to be “a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning” (Ellis, 2009a, p. 223). This need creates a communication gap that makes cooperation through interaction, and therefore the use of language, necessary.

Further, it is imperative for tasks to have “a real-world relationship” (Skehan, 1998, p. 268). As described, pedagogic tasks are closely linked to target tasks – activities one performs in the out-of-classroom world (Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden, 2006). These target tasks are elicited in the process of a needs analysis in the target setting, and this information is used to develop tasks for the syllabus (Long, 2005b). While target tasks refer to actions in the real world and can involve no language use at all, pedagogical tasks require and motivate language use. As a result, a certain level of language proficiency may be needed to complete pedagogical tasks successfully.

Although tasks are concerned with meaning, it does not mean that the language form is ignored. By directing learners’ attention to the exchange of information, which facilitates meaningful interaction, tasks allow learners to process meaningful input and produce meaningful output (Van den Branden, 2006) and as part of this process a Focus on Form occurs (see below). However, in contrast to exercises, in tasks students are not provided with the language forms that are compulsory to use. Rather,
as Ellis (2009a, p. 223) explains, “learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.” In fact, tasks require complex skills based on both linguistic and cognitive resources (Van den Branden, 2006). The following section outlines differences between form, forms and meaning, and the way these are incorporated (or not) into task design.

*Focus on Form (FonF)*

FonF contrasts to focus-on-forms – with the latter including such things as drilling certain grammar structures or vocabulary items and where the primary focus is on a language item or structure. This focus on forms in the classroom is pivotal to a synthetic approach in language teaching (Long & Robinson, 1998). The PPP model described in Section 3.2.1 above is one of the examples of teaching based on a synthetic approach that is focused on language forms (Willis & Willis, 2007). It requires teachers to present discrete language items at the beginning of the lesson so that these particular items can be practised and then used by students at the stage of language production. In contrast, FonF has meaning as the primary focus for learning activities, with attention drawn to the language form during the course of meaningful communication (Doughty & Williams, 1998). This approach is considered to be the most effective because, as Long and Norris (2009, p. 137) describe,

> attention to linguistic code features occurs just as their meaning and function are most likely to be evident to the learners concerned, at a moment when they have a perceived need for the new item, when they are attending, as a result, and when they are psycholinguistically ready to… learn the items.

As a result, FonF benefits from the advantages of focus on meaning, as utilized in the strong form of CLT, but also overcomes its weakness by incorporating a language component. This may be done using such strategies as consciousness-raising, which means that at some point learner’s attention is drawn to the language form (Long & Robinson, 1998). As a result, learners may notice certain language features relevant to the situation as a response to the arising difficulties, and noticing, it has been proposed, is required for successful language acquisition (Schmidt, 1990).
In addition to being incidental, in TBLT there can also be a deliberate FonF, guided by the teacher. Support for such explicit instruction on language form has been indicated both in the literature, and also by practitioners. Such a practice responds not only to student expectations, but also to the common need or desire to achieve higher levels of accuracy (Willis, 2004). Samuda (2009) provides an example of a task where the learners realise their lack of language to express meaning, or shades of meaning (in this case, degrees of probability). The teacher introduces modal words, first implicitly in her own speech, and then explicitly with an explanation on the blackboard. What is key to this is that the task was intentionally designed in such way to create the need for this particular kind of language (Samuda, 2009).

The nature of form-meaning relationships is, however, not straightforward. Skehan (1996a) raises concerns that during interaction learners are usually too focused on meaning and no attention is left for attending to form. In addition, meaning can be conveyed without the full and correct use of the forms by employing communication strategies and elliptic sentences (Skehan, 1996a). On the other hand, Van den Branden (2006) argues that when learners use the language to communicate meaningfully, they will automatically pay some attention to form, and the degree of attention can be changed according to task design. Even so, questions remain as to when FonF should take place in a task cycle (Ellis, 2009b; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 2004).

Task cycle

Rather than being a monolithic activity, a task is approached as a cycle of activities. The task cycle has been generally described as having three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task (Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Willis, 2004). The pre-task phase serves as an introduction where students are familiarised with the topic and goals of the task. They may also receive some useful advice about language, perform a small-scale preparation activity or are presented with examples of the task done by other people. During the task phase, in addition to the actual task performance by the students, the students may plan a report to present to others about the task (e.g., classmates or general public), and then develop the report itself, which may be either written or
oral. In the post-task phase there may be an explicit focus on the language emanating from the task and students may reflect on the language used and/or they may do related practice exercises and other follow-up activities. This framework is flexible and can be adjusted according to the levels of proficiency of the learners. Further, there may be an emphasis on some phases while others can be omitted, and more than one task cycle can be used during the lesson (Willis, 1996).

For Willis (2009), the task cycle contrasts to the PPP model in that the pre-task phase does not necessarily include a linguistic focus (e.g., of a grammar structure or of vocabulary), although it can contain some linguistic input that may help learners to successfully achieve the task outcome. While the task performance stage is concerned with meaning, for Willis it is in the last two stages, namely planning and reporting, where a FonF may arise (Willis, 2009). Following the same initial stages of the task cycle, Skehan (1996a) proposes that reporting should be followed by a language focus, reinforced through task repetition or performance of other relevant tasks.

For other scholars, whilst the task cycle appears similar to these models, the main difference is that FonF can occur at any stage. Such an approach reflects the belief that FonF should be in response to learner need – that is language is provided to learners when otherwise they are unable to express their meaning in a way required by the task. In other words, it happens in response to “a need to mean,” and so FonF is “a resource for meaning” (Samuda, 2009, p. 382). A good illustration of this is provided by Samuda (2009) where a particular task requires students to make guesses about the owner of a coat, but they require new language in order to express their ideas. After this input is explicitly provided by the teacher, they go back to discussing their ideas and making suggestions. In this case, learners’ attention shifts from meaning to form and then to meaning again.

Teacher and student roles

TBLT is referred to as a learner-centred/learner-directed approach (Long, 2015). The idea of learner-centeredness has become popular due, at least in part, to the spread of
CLT (Nunan, 2004). In TBLT learners are seen as active co-constructors of language learning from the planning stage through to evaluation, by considering their characteristics in decision-making and by encouraging their participation in this process (Nunan, 2004).

Learner-centeredness can be achieved in three ways in TBLT. First, through locally-based analysis of learners’ needs; second, through the FonF that is driven by the learners’ internal syllabus; and third, by catering for learners’ individual characteristics (Long, 2015). Further, with learners being co-constructors of the task, TBLT takes into account learner-related contextual factors such as their goals (Van den Branden, 2006). In addition, TBLT provides students with an opportunity to be initiators rather than mere recipients of learning, participants in decision-making, and feedback providers. As co-participants in the TBLT process, learners are treated as communicators (Ellis & Shintani, 2013), that is they are encouraged to act as language users rather than language learners (Van den Branden, 2006). Overall, Long (2015, p. 13) suggests that this approach facilitates students’ “being treated as rational human beings, … playing an active role in their own progress in a learner-centred, egalitarian classroom.”

While a teacher’s role in TBLT is not central, it remains essential for successful learning. It involves selecting or developing tasks that are motivating, involve appropriate and relevant content, and that provide opportunities for input, negotiation of meaning, and output (Van Avermaet, Colpin, Van Gorp, Bogaert, & Van den Branden, 2006). That is, a teacher should ensure they use the opportunities a task provides to facilitate language learning (Samuda, 2009; Van Avermaet et. al, 2006). To achieve this, the teacher’s role begins long before the lesson, at the planning stage. This is when a number of decisions are made, such as the choice of a task, its goals, content, classroom management and so on. During the task performance, the teacher works in ways to ensure tasks facilitate language acquisition. Finally, a key role for teachers – in collaboration with the learners – is assessment. This should reflect task engagement and goal achievement, which in turn should be used for the future planning.
As with all aspects of TBLT, different aspects of the teachers’ roles are given different emphasis by various scholars. For example, Van Avermaet et al. (2006) see the key role of the teacher in TBLT as being a motivator, and the one who ensures that the processes crucial for language acquisition, such as interaction and focus on form, happen in the classroom. Therefore, the teacher selects and presents tasks in an order that keeps learners interested, motivated, and challenged, so that they expend sufficient effort and as a result, learners’ proficiency level in the target language increases. By implication, another key role for the teacher is to create conditions that promote student engagement (Van Avermaet et al., 2006). This may be achieved through planned and unplanned intervention, keeping a focus on meaning, by encouraging student initiative, and by asking questions instead of only providing information and explanation.

During the task cycle the teacher’s role will change (Willis, 2009). For example, at the pre-task phase the teacher may be more active when introducing the task, while during task performance their role will involve monitoring, rather than being an active participant. In this way learners avoid overreliance on teacher assistance and learn to find the ways to achieve task completion independently. At the post-task stage when learners are expected to prepare a report of their task outcomes, the teacher may again be more active – acting as a language advisor. This does not mean that the teachers tackle every language issue that arises, rather they encourage students to work it out themselves. They may also suggest other resources, such as using a dictionary, to the learners. If a presentation is made in the post-task stage, the teacher’s role may be that of a chairperson, the one who introduces, watches the time, sums up and provides feedback.

Ellis (2009a) argues, however, that some approaches in TBLT allow for more teacher-centred instruction at particular stages. For instance, Prabhu (1987) describes the teacher as a role model in the pre-task phase, while Samuda (2009) describes teachers as providing explicit explanation of grammar during the task phase. Samuda (2009, p. 391) suggests a “leading from behind” role for teachers in the case of a task where new language is introduced. In such cases, the teacher acts as a guide who
directs students’ attention to both form and meaning and also to their interconnection.

Thus, there is a variety of ways tasks can be used in the classroom to engage participants, both teachers and learners. This flexibility is also evident at the level of educational planning, as discussed below.

### 3.2.4. Tasks in educational planning

Tasks have been used to inform the design of syllabuses for courses, projects, institutional and national curricula (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Whatever the scale, syllabuses are broadly classified as being synthetic or analytic, which in turn reflects the choice and use of various components, such as tasks. First, an outline of these two approaches is provided, and then the possibilities for tasks in both types of syllabus are described.

Synthetic syllabuses are organized so that language items – grammar structures, words, phrases, phonemes, functions, and so on – are taught one by one, in a lock-step manner, with the expectation that each separate element will be mastered to perfection before moving on to the next one. It is further expected that the learner will be able to put these discrete items together in order to communicate. Depending on their structural units, these syllabuses can be classified as lexical, structural, notional and functional, topical and situational syllabuses (Long & Crookes, 1992). The weakness of these syllabuses is that learners are expected to synthesise the content by themselves, and yet there is a lack of empirical support for students learning in this way. Similarly, the expectation for students to learn a specific language item at the specific time it is taught is not based on research or theoretical judgement (Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 2004).

Analytic syllabuses, on the other hand, use holistic target language samples which are then analysed by the learners, and from this rules are developed (Long & Crookes, 1992). Examples of analytic syllabuses, according to Nunan (2004), include project-based, content-based, text-based and thematic syllabuses. Long and Crookes (1992), however, argue that the primary distinction criteria should be the focus rather
than the “name” of the syllabus. For instance, they claim that some thematic syllabuses are still based on the linguistic units and, therefore, are not analytic. They argue that instead the focus should be on meaning rather than on discrete linguistic units. Thus, analytic syllabuses should be developed based on the purposes of the language learning rather than on such things as vocabulary or grammar (Van den Branden, 2006). Tasks are the basic unit for program design in analytic syllabuses because language emerges through meaningful use (Long & Crookes, 1992, p. 29). In addition, in analytic syllabuses tasks may be used as a means of assessment and for testing purposes (Willis, 2004).

There are three types of analytic task syllabuses that have been used in classrooms and described in the literature: procedural, process, and task-based. A detailed overview of these can be found in Long and Crookes (1992). For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to note that the TBLT syllabus has distinct features that are absent in the others: it incorporates needs analysis and includes a FonF (Long & Crookes, 1992). These features respond to evidence about what facilitates language acquisition by the learners. However, it has also been pointed out that such a syllabus might be difficult to implement in some settings due to the absence of the clear language component and the need to develop new resources (Ellis, 2009a).

An alternative to task-based teaching that uses tasks in program design is task-supported teaching (Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Willis, 2004, p. 28). Skehan (1996a) calls these two approaches strong and weak TBLT respectively. Samuda and Bygate (2008) describe task-supported teaching as an educational context where tasks are used alongside other types of learning activities for a number of purposes and in a number of ways. For instance, tasks are used to “actualise part of the curriculum, to enrich the syllabus or to provide additional learning opportunities” (Samuda & Bygate, 2008, p. 59). In this case, however, tasks are not compulsory for the teaching of the syllabus or for assessment.

It is suggested that the same tasks can be utilized for either task-based or task-supported programs to achieve their respective learning goals (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). For the latter, however, the absence of a framework creates a risk of applying tasks too loosely, which may diminish their value as a pedagogical tool. Another
cautionary note is that, while it may be more appropriate for some contexts and more practical from the teachers’ point of view, there is little research-based evidence for the practice of task-supported programs. Nevertheless, Samuda and Bygate (2008) argue that it is important to maintain it as a possibility. This view is in line with the post-method phase of language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006; Samuda & Bygate, 2008) that focuses on what is better for learners – rather than on one particular method.

Extending this, Ellis (2009a, p. 232) distinguishes between “a pure task-based syllabus, a grammar-oriented task syllabus, [and] a hybrid task syllabus.” The first consists of unfocused tasks (with no linguistic content specified), the second incorporates focused tasks (designed with specific linguistic content in mind), and the third is a combination of both. In contrast to synthetic syllabuses, in the case of focused tasks “learners are not aware what a linguistic focus of a task is” (Ellis & Shintani, 2013, p. 140). Thus, both grammar-oriented and hybrid task syllabuses combine task-based and linguistic syllabuses into one through the use of task design which integrates a language focus. Another way to combine these is through a modules-based approach, where some parts are purely task-based and some are purely linguistic and these parts are attended to separately (Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

In recent years, TBLT has been introduced into local and national curricula in a variety of settings and countries. These include, but are not limited to, those represented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below:
Table 3.1. *Settings of TBLT implementation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>language courses for adults</td>
<td>Iwashita and Li (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university students</td>
<td>Bao and Du (2015), McAllister et al. (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private institutions</td>
<td>Ilin et al. (2007), Shintani (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>migrants</td>
<td>Oliver, Haig and Grote (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first nation peoples</td>
<td>Oliver, Grote, Rochecouste, and Exell (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionals</td>
<td>Mohan and Smith (1992),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching second languages and dialects</td>
<td>Oliver et al. (2013), Van Gorp and Bogaert (2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. *Countries of TBLT implementation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English-speaking countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the USA</td>
<td>Leaver and Kaplan (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Dunn (2015), Ogilvie and Dunn (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Oliver et al. (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>East (2012b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Prabhu (1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Barnard and Nguyen (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Yan and He (2012), Zhang (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Park (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Hashim, Selamat, and Raja Sulaiman (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Lin and Wu (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Lambert (2010), Shintani (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Van Gorp and Bogaert (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>McAllister et al. (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Malicka and Levkina (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Bao and Du (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Dushku (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Genc (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English countries in the Americas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Solares (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Chacón (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Lopes (2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there are some successful examples of TBLT implementation in FL settings, studies also suggest a number of challenges (Adams & Newton, 2009; Shehadeh, 2012). The overview of these is provided in the following section.
3.2.5. Challenges of TBLT implementation

The difficulties for TBLT implementation appear at a number of levels. Shehadeh (2012) classifies them as institutional (e.g., related to exams and class size), teacher-related (traditional teacher roles, teacher-centred classrooms, lack of knowledge or doubts about TBLT and its applicability), or learner-related (e.g., avoiding mistakes). In addition to the lack of information about TBLT, Shehadeh (2012), Butler (2011) and Ellis (2009a) describe conceptual constraints and differences in educational philosophy (e.g., conflicts with local values and misconceptions regarding CLT/TBLT) as well as a lack of availability of resources. The wider socio-cultural context of implementation and the structure of educational systems are further considerations (Ellis, 2009a). Some examples of these are discussed next.

Challenges with TBLT implementation have been reported in a number of studies, particularly related to the establishment of classroom routines. In many contexts, such implementation requires changes to the usual way student and teacher roles are enacted (Carless, 2012). This is because the teacher’s role in TBLT differs from that which occurs in language-focused and teacher-centred environments (see Section 3.2.3 above). For example, Van Avermaet et al. (2006) have described this role as being more complex. Indeed, teachers are required to change from being an instructor to a facilitator of learning (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) and to improvise in a less predictable learning environment (Ellis, 2000). TBLT may also require teachers to have a high level of language proficiency themselves and to prepare additional resources to suit the needs of individual learners, which is often perceived as burdensome (Brandle, 2008; Zhang, 2007). With a focus on practical and meaningful use of language, and with the learning process being more engaging, the classroom also becomes noisier (Carless, 2004). This is further complicated by large class sizes, difficulties with discipline, and the pervasive use of the mother tongue by the learners (Carless, 2002; Hui, 2004; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Kollmann, 2005).

Students may also experience difficulties working within the TBLT framework in the classroom. For instance, some learners have been reported to give preference to grammar-focused instruction as they believe it better prepares them for examinations (Hashim et al., 2014). In addition, learners might not be used to collaborating in pairs...
and groups. While pair and group work are not essential for TBLT, it is a large part of most programs. This may be attributed to the research findings showing that the interaction between peers is richer than that occurring between teachers and students (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). As a participant in language classes in an Indonesian university where such a methodology was implemented, Coleman found that it appeared to be challenging for both teachers and students to change their normal behaviour and embrace the new roles (Coleman, 1996). As a result, some learners were reported as using their L1 too often instead of communicating in the target language (Carless, 2008).

This situation is further complicated by institutional and socio-cultural constraints. For instance, Van Avermaet et al. (2006) describe the need for teachers who implement TBLT to develop certain attitudes that assist and enhance task-based teaching, such as willingness to share control with the students, flexibility with interventions, and tolerance of errors. However, not all teachers are provided with adequate training, which leaves them with little or no understanding of this approach (e.g., Adamson & Yin, 2008; Green, 2005). Moreover, teachers themselves might not be ready or willing to accept this new role. Shehadeh (2012, p. 7) suggests that one of the challenges in the adoption of TBLT in FL settings relates to teachers’ beliefs, specifically that TBLT can be seen by teachers as “an alien concept” that cannot be easily incorporated into their current ways of teaching. This conflict between the underpinnings of TBLT and more traditional views on language teaching can also be explained on the basis of socio-cultural reasons (McKay, 2002; Park, 2012). A particular example of this is an inconsistency between the Western ideas that underpin communicative teaching instruction and the dominance of Confucian norms in Asian countries as described by Carless (2007) in his study of TBLT implementation in Hong Kong schools.

Clearly, the difficulties that arise during TBLT implementation result from it being an innovation in these settings, one that creates a push for change. To counter the resultant confusion, resistance and potential failure of this innovation, there is a need for appropriate change management. Careful management can help overcome the anxiety and inability to implement change, and also prevent the potential for wasting
resources (Holliday, 1992, 1994a; Hyland & Wong, 2013). This is important because, as Fullan (1999, p. 64) warns, “…there is really no such thing as easy product transfer in social reform. Innovation is not a pill, a widget or a silver bullet.” In view of this need, a number of TBLT researchers have suggested that change management may be used to assist successful implementation (Adamson & Yin, 2008; East, 2012b; Ellis, 2009a; Najjari, 2014; Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010; Rashtchi & Keyvanfar, 2012). The relevant aspects of change management and the way these are addressed (or not) in TBLT literature are discussed in the following section.

3.2.6. Summary

This section has provided a description of TBLT as a language teaching approach that builds on research findings, empirical evidence, pedagogical principles, and educational philosophies. There are different ways TBLT and tasks can be implemented both at the level of syllabus and individual classroom. Also identified was a set of principles that differentiate TBLT tasks from other learning activities. Based on the literature review, this differentiation includes the following task features:

- meaning is primary (Ellis, 2009a; Skehan, 1998);
- there is a non-linguistic outcome (Ellis, 2009a; Skehan, 1998);
- there is a “gap” that necessitates interaction (Ellis, 2009a);
- they draw on students’ own FL resources (Ellis, 2009a);
- they have a relationship to the real-world (Skehan, 1998);
- they incorporate meaning and form through the Focus-on-Form (Long, 2015);
- they are needs-based (Long, 2015); and

The present study utilizes the term TBLT as an umbrella term for a variety of the approaches described in this review. To that end, this list of task features will be used as a guiding framework for the discussion of various aspects of its implementation and comparison to the current FLT in Ukraine.
In addition, an overview of TBLT implementation in a variety of settings was provided. Highlighted in this description were accounts of some associated difficulties. Overall, it is not clear how TBLT should be introduced into particular educational contexts. For instance, who should make a decision whether TBLT should be implemented in a particular setting? What can be done to motivate teachers to use this new approach in their practice and what kind of assistance should be provided? These and other aspects of educational change are especially relevant for the present study which seeks to understand whether TBLT would be appropriate for implementation in post-Soviet Ukrainian schools – an under-researched context.

3.3. Change management: Towards context-appropriate innovation

This section examines the literature pertaining to educational change undertaken in context-appropriate and ecologically valid ways. The rationale, features and implications of such an approach are discussed. This is followed by an examination of two aspects of change management relevant to the present study, namely: top-down and bottom-up directions for change, and the process of glocalization. The section concludes with an overview of the practical application of these suggestions. Throughout this, links between this literature and the existing TBLT research are made and gaps identified. This leads to a discussion of the methodological design used to explore these issues (Section 3.4).

3.3.1. An ecological approach to innovation

Studying instances of existing educational change has helped researchers to better understand the conditions necessary for successful innovation. For example, analysing reports on successful educational reforms, Fullan (1999) found that their common features are addressing the local need and local ownership of reforms. Van den Branden (2009) also claims that local conditions should be considered for successful innovation to take place. Further, it has been suggested that understanding the context of implementation makes educational reforms more sustainable in the long-term (Hyland & Wong, 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, unsuccessful reform projects “focused on ideas… but almost totally neglected the culture of the
institutions which were to be the hosts of these innovations” (Fullan, 1999, p. 67). Likewise, Nation and Macalister (2010) describe how reforms that are deemed to be culturally inappropriate or imposed from the outside are more likely to be unsuccessful. This is particularly the case when the approach to innovation “assumes a fairly linear relationship between input and uptake” (Tudor, 2003, p. 6).

In response to these findings, an ecological approach to innovation has been proposed (Vesisenaho & Dillon, 2013). This approach shifts the focus of reform to the local setting and care is taken to contextualize the change (Tudor, 2003). In this way, the concept of ecology is used to reflect consideration of the multiple components of the educational context where change in one area has an impact on others (Waters & Vilches, 2013). From an ecological perspective, the participants in the process of change are deemed to be one component of the complex educational environment alongside its cultural, social, historical and other components (Vesisenaho & Dillon, 2013). For instance, Holliday (1994b) emphasizes that, in the case of general education, teaching language would inevitably be influenced by the school curriculum and available resources, as well as by the expectations of teachers of other subjects. Further, Markee (1997) claims that educational innovation should be compatible with previous ways of teaching.

In addition, it is suggested that the success of an innovation also depends on its appropriacy. Tudor (2003) and Holliday (1994b) suggest that in order to be appropriate, a proposed change should consider the macro context of teaching as well as beliefs and attitudes of the potential users. Markee (1986) posits that investigating and incorporating those aspects of the wider socio-cultural context into the course design helps make the course relevant to the institution, the educational system, society, and the country and its economy as a whole. In other words, it has to consider both micro and macro contexts of language teaching (Holliday, 1994a; Watson-Gegeo, 1992). Table 3.3 summarizes the contextual factors suggested in the literature that influence implementation at these two levels:
### Table 3.3. Contextual factors of implementation at macro and micro levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Macro context</th>
<th>Micro context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Munby (1978, p. 217)     | • attitudes of government  
• status of English  
• expectations of institution/society  
• timing                                                                                                                                   | • amount/suitability of equipment  
• traditional styles of learning  
• teaching techniques  
• learners’ motivation and expectations                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Kennedy (2013, pp. 17-19)| • financing  
• resources allocation  
• setting standards and criteria  
• establishment of the curriculum  
• monitoring and evaluation  
• control                                                                                                                                   | • the classroom  
• the stakeholders’ beliefs and attitudes  
• teachers’ personal stories  
• teachers’ freedom to innovate                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Richards (1990, p. 2)    | • timing  
• financing  
• resources  
• administration                                                                                                                                     | • characteristics of the learners  
• learning styles  
• characteristics of the teachers  
• preferred teaching approaches  
• assessment procedures                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Van Avermaet et al. (2006, pp. 176-177) | • policy regulations (curriculum, national exams, school regulations, official timetables)  
• links with the outside world (e.g. parental demands, societal pressure)  
• time pressure                                                                                                                                    | • characteristics of the learners (age, level of proficiency, needs, interests, status)  
• characteristics of the teacher (subjective theories and beliefs, years of experience)  
• features of the classroom environment (number of learners, available tools and syllabuses)                                                                                                            |
| West (1994, pp. 4-5)     | • the prevailing attitudes or culture                                                                                                                     | • resources (staff, accommodation, time) available  
• the materials, aids available  
• methods available  
• teachers  
• methodologies previously applied in the setting                                                                                                                                                                            |
In line with these views, there has been growing attention paid to contextual factors among TBLT researchers (e.g., Batstone, 2012; Ellis, 2009a; Ortega, 2015; Van Avermaet et al., 2006). This is reflected in recent approaches to task definition, such as the one by Candlin (2009, p. 26), namely that a task is “one of a set of differentiated, sequencable, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers… in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu.” Indeed, given that tasks are supposed to be designed based on language learning needs of particular learners, the focus on real classroom contexts rather than highly controlled or laboratory settings is required (Van den Branden, 2006).

In terms of implementation, it has also been acknowledged that the participants co-construct reality and interact with the task in different ways, based on their personal interpretations (Ellis, 2009b). These are influenced by a number of context-related factors such as characteristics of learners (e.g., age, level of proficiency, interests), teachers (e.g., beliefs and professional experience), the classroom (e.g., number of students, resources, syllabus), policies, examinations, and expectations from the society (Van Avermaet et al., 2006, pp. 176-177).

For instance, empirical research shows that task performance can vary greatly with different groups of students and in different contexts (Ellis, 2000, 2009b). In particular, it has been found that learners’ previous knowledge may contribute to the way a task is designed (Breen, 2009), and learners’ understanding of a task develops on the basis of contextual cues (Mohan & Smith, 1992), such as their previous experiences and the learning culture that exists in their current place of study. Further, Batstone (2012) describes how factors such as learner roles and private student-student interactions in the classroom can influence task performance and teacher-learner interactions. Therefore, following a socio-cultural approach to TBLT, it is recommended that the same attention and significance should be given to the setting and participants as to the task itself (Ellis, 2000, p. 210).

Further, the way teachers interpret and present tasks will also differ (Ellis, 2000; 2009a). For instance, Batstone (2012) suggests that practitioners adjust the methodology, resources, teacher/student roles, and modes of work during the lesson
depending on the classroom context. Hence, task characteristics (e.g., task repetition, task structure, corrective feedback) are influenced by the context of implementation and by those who design and implement tasks.

Therefore, Van Avermaet et al. (2006) suggest that teachers should follow not only the principles of TBLT and the local curriculum, but also consider contextual influences. Further, Ortega (2015, p. 271) recommends that TBLT research should be contextualized through the consideration of learners’ experience “in their physical, interpersonal, social, cultural, and historical context.”

However, while contextual factors have been shown to influence both task design and TBLT implementation, much research about tasks continues to analyse excerpts of task interactions in isolation from the context (Batstone, 2012). Clearly, more empirical data on contextual influences are needed from a variety of settings to facilitate ecological implementation of TBLT. The present study attempts to provide these data.

3.3.2. Top-down and bottom-up models of implementation

While an ecological approach to educational innovation emphasizes the crucial role of context, those who influence the way change is made – such as policy makers, government officials, project leaders or researchers – are often distanced from the actual context of its implementation (Tudor, 2003; Wedell, 2009). Thus, given that a great deal of educational innovation happens in a top-down manner (Bailey & Springer, 2013; Kennedy, 1988, 2013), it becomes imposed on the context rather than derived from it. In this way, innovation is promoted through legislation prepared by the relevant authorities (Nation & Macalister, 2010). This type of reform is very typical in education because “it is a potentially effective way of ensuring implementation of a common national policy throughout a nation,” when teachers are “presented with a ‘package’” they are required to follow (Kennedy, 2013, p. 16). However, such an approach does not ensure implementation. Cavanagh (1997) suggests that top-down policies may have little effect on actual school improvement as mandatory requirements do not cater for the culture of particular schools. As a
result, there is often a discrepancy between an imposed curriculum or materials and what actually happens in the classroom (Kennedy, 2013).

By contrast, a bottom-up approach involves users of the prospective change in the process of its design and development (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Waters & Vilches, 2001; Yan & He, 2012). Waters and Vilches (2001) suggest that teachers need not only to learn about the rationale for the innovation, but also to have an opportunity to approach it critically, ask questions, and discuss it. It is proposed that this helps the innovation develop in a way that is meaningful for teachers and motivates them to engage with the change (Waters & Vilches, 2001, p. 137). Kennedy (2013) cites a report on an ESP project in Brazil where university teachers maintained a sense of ownership throughout a project by being involved in decision-making (problem identification). This approach facilitates effective change because “ultimately… it is the EFL teacher who decides what innovations find their way into the classroom: how new methods are implemented, new technologies deployed and new textbooks used” (Hyland & Wong, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, successful innovation should build upon teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning (Nation & Macalister, 2010), and consider their level of enthusiasm, and their strengths and weaknesses (Courtney, 1988).

These ideas have also been reflected by some TBLT scholars. For instance, Butler (2011, p. 47) cautions that “without empowering teachers, it would not be a surprise to see TBLT winding up being a mere policy slogan.” Zhang (2007) describes how the top-down implementation of TBLT in schools in China resulted in TBLT being poorly implemented by the teachers. Ellis (2009a) argues that the defining feature of success is teachers’ knowledge about TBLT and its underlying principles, and indicates that teachers should be given a possibility to revise tasks or the program more generally to respond to difficulties as they occur.

Despite the apparent advantages of a bottom-up approach on its own it, too, is not sufficient. This is because there needs to be support provided for teachers in order to facilitate and sustain change (Fullan, 2003a; Van den Branden, 2009; White, 1988). As Hyland and Wong (2013, p. 2) indicate, there is a need for implementation to be accompanied by “clear policies, adequate funding and professional development.
initiatives.” In their study in China, Yan and He (2012) found that it was not enough for innovation planners to only consider teachers’ perspectives, but teachers also needed to be provided with resources, funding, and professional training. Kennedy (2013) suggests that for successful innovation, such aspects as financing, resources allocation (including human resources), setting standards and criteria, establishment of the curriculum, monitoring and evaluation need to be centrally supported. Waters and Vilches (2013, p. 66) describe these supporting resources as “secondary innovations” that have to be done before the main innovation takes place. Apart from the pragmatic value of such support, it can also facilitate the development of positive attitudes towards the change (Yan & He, 2012).

Therefore, when implementing an ecological model of innovation, change agents should not “rely on top-down mechanistic models” but facilitate “interaction between participants at all levels” (Kennedy, 2013, p. 26, emphasis added). A locally sensitive innovation, therefore, should take into account all those factors that will influence how practitioners implement an innovation and how they can be supported in this process (Wedell, 2003, p. 445). For this purpose, it is essential that policy makers consult widely with all stakeholders involved in implementation (Wedell, 2009, p. 24).

Butler (2011, pp. 49-50) explains well how this might apply to TBLT: “researchers and theorists can provide teachers with a basic recipe of the tasks that are performed in TBLT. However, depending on the context, teachers may want to change some of the ingredients or add some local elements.” At the same time, Van den Branden (2009) argues that teachers might not have time or sufficient knowledge to develop the teaching material, and when provided with such materials, they can focus on and dedicate more time to achieving the curriculum goals. Thus, there is a need for a balance of top-down and bottom-up influences in TBLT implementation.

The consequences of adopting such an approach, or not as the case may be, was demonstrated in a study conducted by Adamson and Yin (2008) who looked at the role of school leadership in the management of curriculum innovation. The three Hong Kong secondary schools participating in the study differed in the support given to and by teachers and school leaders. Adamson and Yin found that the promotion of
TBLT by the principal was not sufficient, and the only successful case of implementation happened where it had strong support from the teachers and where the conditions necessary for success were provided. These factors not only enabled change, but also made it sustainable in the long term.

In recent times TBLT researchers have begun to shift their focus to teacher education, particularly to critical reflection on the new approaches. For instance, Ogilvie and Dunn (2010) investigated a shift to TBLT using a constructivist-based approach in the context of pre-service teacher education in a Canadian university. In this case, student teachers were given opportunities to reflect critically on their experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning, eliciting and discussing prior knowledge and assumptions rather than just providing these students with new information. Although student teachers did not end up incorporating tasks in their practicums, the course was found to have promoted the development of positive attitudes towards TBLT. Similarly, in his study following the 2010 curriculum reform in New Zealand, East (2014a, 2014b) found that reflective practices (i.e., the use of reading logs) in pre-service and in-service teacher education may indeed facilitate a better understanding of TBLT and the development of positive attitudes towards this new approach. His findings also suggest that this approach may lead to changes in teaching practice, although the conclusions drawn were based on teacher reflections about their own practices and not supported either by lesson plans or observations. Whilst these results are promising, further studies are needed to find effective ways to involve and support teachers in the process of TBLT implementation. The current study explores ways this can be done in a post-Soviet school context.

3.3.3. Glocalization

In the modern world there is a tendency for ideas to be transferred cross-culturally. In the course of globalization such factors as economic competitiveness provide an impetus for change and a need for improvement in local teaching (Lo Bianco, 2013; Rodwell, 1998). As a result, new ideas for teaching are spread around the world (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002). Typically the direction of such cross-cultural transfer is from “developed” to “developing” countries, and the latter are often treated simply as
recipients of change (Nation & Macalister, 2010). In a way, this transfer reflects the top-down model described in the previous section. One example of this is the concept of “group work” that occurs within lessons, developed in Western English-speaking countries and transferred to other places (Holliday, 1994a).

There are both advantages and disadvantages for the transfer of ideas in education. For local educational systems that are unable to resolve problems using their own approaches and resources, it might be beneficial to seek solutions from elsewhere. For example, the adoption of CLT by many countries around the world addressed the discontent and poor outcomes emanating from more traditional approaches to language teaching (Butler, 2011).

A key drawback of this pattern of transfer can be the lack of consideration given to the local context. This situation has been compared by Holliday (1992, p. 403) to the phenomenon of “tissue rejection” in medicine: once the external support is removed, the innovation fails to thrive. For instance, many curriculum innovations in Hong Kong that were “borrowed” from the Western English-speaking countries, such as student-centred teaching, failed to bring change as they were not compatible with local values (Carless & Harfitt, 2013, p. 174). Rodwell (1998) also describes how participatory approaches used in the development of educational management in the West can be challenging for people in other cultures. Moreover, Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) suggest that without sufficient attention to context, some innovations have exacerbated the problems instead of facilitating improvement.

Not surprisingly, considerable support has been given to the concept of change that is locally grounded. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009, p. 51) explain that “you can’t just adopt the end product of something that took others years to develop” because “no two places are alike… Each has a distinctive ‘personality’ in the form of its cultures and histories.” Therefore, it has been suggested that a successful reform should consider the local situation in decision-making (Tudor, 2003) by building on existing traditions (Waters & Vilches, 2013) and being sensitive to the local culture (Holliday, 1992).
In this way, the relationship between the global and local input in the change process is similar to the combination of the top-down and bottom-up influences: they are not exclusive, but rather complement each other. Kraidy (2003) explains it as being reciprocal processes. For Lo Bianco (2013), innovation happens in response to the failure of the available methods to deal with the problems in language teaching. In this case, ideas are borrowed from other disciplines and new developments in culture, technology, and other areas (Lo Bianco, 2013, p. 148). This leads to what Holliday (1994b, p. 9) calls an “informed exchange of technology” instead of the blind import of ideas from one context to another.

This combination of global innovation or ideas with local features is called glocalization (see, for instance, Carr, 2003; East, 2008; Robertson, 1992). The term “glocalise” originates from the Japanese word “dochakuka,” or “global localisation,” and was first used in reference to the ways increasing participation of Japan in international marketing can be made more successful (Robertson, 1992, p. 173). Unlike globalization “with its connotations of standardisation, homogenisation and universalism” (Kraidy, 2003, p. 37), glocalization caters both for global and local factors pertinent to any particular sphere. As such, it is now applied in a variety of disciplines such as business, sociology, and education.

In terms of language teaching, one of the factors influencing glocalization is the status of the language being taught and especially whether it is a second language (SL) or a FL. Although the findings of research undertaken in settings where a target language is a SL are often generalised to other settings of language learning, such as FLT (Shehadeh, 2012), the difference between SL and FL contexts are quite significant (Allwright, 1996).

In terms of SL, despite being different to a learner’s L1, it may be the medium of instruction and can be the language of the government and official documents. This is a case of immigrants whose L1 is different from the official language of their new country of residence, of people in countries with an official second language, such as English in India (Shehadeh, 2012), or of first nation people who speak a traditional language as their first, but live in a country where their second language is the official language (e.g., Aboriginal Australians).
By contrast, a FL is one that is not widely used in the country and is learned as a subject with the goal to be able to communicate with foreigners or to enable reading of foreign texts. H. D. Brown (2007), for instance, urges that a clear distinction should be made between ESL and EFL contexts given that in the former students have an opportunity to use and practise the target language outside the classroom, whilst in the latter case such opportunities may not exist. In addition, Rosa (2004) notes FL and SL settings may differ in terms of motivation for language learning.

There are a number of implications for language teaching according to whether the target language is a SL or FL. First, Holliday (1994a) notes teachers in FL contexts are more likely to be recipients of a methodology developed elsewhere. He explains that these teachers are often presented with the theory, abstract ideas about the new teaching approach, which they then find difficult or impossible to implement. Second, the goals of language teaching may vary from one educational context to another. For instance, in many non-Western settings, along with teaching the language FL teachers are expected to educate their students about how to be good citizens (Holiday, 1995). Finally, it has been noted that communicative competence needs to be achieved in the ways that are appropriate to a specific cultural and social context (Breen, 1985; Holliday, 1994a; Butler, 2011). According to Stelma (2010), this is because different cultures may have different approaches to communication in general. This means that not all principles of communicative teaching developed in SL settings can be applied to FLT.

TBLT has been described as having the potential to incorporate features of the local context (Long & Norris, 2009) and in this way allow for glocalization. This is because TBLT is not a method, but an approach to teaching which is “multifaceted” (Willis, 2004, p. 3). That is, instead of prescribing a strict method teachers should follow, TBLT provides a set of universal principles which are used to address the needs of the learners (Long & Norris, 2009). Next, it considers classroom learners’ experience and links learning to real-life situations (Nunan, 2004). Hence, task features would vary depending on the users and contexts (Butler, 2011).

Due to its flexibility, TBLT can be used in combination with other approaches (Ellis, 2009a). Consistent with this view, Carless (2007, p. 604) discusses situated TBLT as
the approach that considers local cultures and contexts, such as focus on forms in the pre-task stage and the use of tasks within PPP. However, the existing body of research contains very few examples of how a glocalization perspective can be used to inform TBLT implementation. The most comprehensive account to date is Prabhu’s (1987) Communicational Teaching Project in India. In this example, however, as Markee (1997) argues, although the people in charge of the curriculum development were Indians, their Western education and academic discourse made them somewhat distanced from the realities of the local teachers. Clearly, research in this area is needed and it is a further aim of the current study.

Given the impact that contextual features may have on implementation of education innovation, the need to adapt to the local conditions is clear (Kennedy, 2013; Shaw, 2004). How this might be achieved and examples of when it has been done are described below.

3.3.4. Adoption and adaptation

Earlier attempts at contextualizing educational change always seemed to occur after adoption (i.e., post implementation), a pattern Butler (2011, p. 43) describes as “from adoption to adaptation.” For instance, in his work on communicative syllabus design, Munby (1978, p. 217) suggests that such factors as “attitudes of government, status of English…, expectations of institution/society,… amount/suitability of equipment…traditional styles of learning…” should be considered after the syllabus has been constructed and implemented. Of the few studies that have addressed TBLT applicability for different contexts, most have also been conducted post-implementation. For instance, Rashtchi and Keyvanfar (2012) did so in Iran, seeking feedback from students and teachers after the introduction of TBLT. Similarly, Adamson and Yin (2008) investigated the process of decision-making in TBLT at the school level after this approach had been incorporated into the Hong Kong official curriculum. As such, the researchers in these studies entered the scene when teachers had already faced difficulties. The failure to prevent or address these difficulties at the outset of innovation appeared to result in teacher resistance, courses being presented in ways at odds with TBLT principles (e.g., Carless, 2003; Green, 2005),
and in some cases, a failure of the project to induce change (e.g., Adamson & Yin, 2008; Najjari, 2014).

In the current literature on educational innovation, the process of change is seen as a complex process that incorporates several stages. One of the most widely cited models of educational change is proposed by Fullan (2003a). It is called the “Triple I model” and it consists of three broad phases: 1) “initiation, mobilisation or adoption,” 2) “implementation or initial use,” and 3) “incorporation … or institutionalisation” (Fullan, 2003a, pp. 3-4). The first stage, or adoption of the innovation, is also known as diffusion of innovations. In a similar way, Markee (1997) proposes the adoption of Cooper’s (1989) framework for the diffusion of innovations in education. This framework contextualizes the innovation through the consideration of “Who adopts what, where, when, why and how?” (Markee, 1997, p. 42). This framework considers the stakeholders (who); the process of diffusion (adopts); the impact of innovation on the local context (what), the socio-cultural setting of implementation (where), the stakeholders’ receptivity to change (when), the need for change (why) and how users might approach it (how). However, it is not clear from these models when exactly the adaptation and contextualization of the proposed change should take place.

At the same time, there is a growing body of educational change literature suggesting that adjustment should be discussed as early as possible in the process of implementation. For instance, Savignon (2007) suggests that in order to inform the selection of appropriate methods and resources for a particular teaching context, it is important to study this setting in the first place. Likewise, Dushku (1998), Nation and Macalister (2010), and Rodwell (1998) argue that gathering relevant information should happen before action is taken to implement the change. For Wedell (2009), this should be done in the form of a baseline study that involves all stakeholders.

Vital first steps in this process are outlined by Waters and Vilches (2001). They describe foundation-building, which includes the key components of familiarisation and socialisation. Thus, before implementation, those responsible for the innovation learn about the context and the end users learn about the innovation. Next, the innovation is modified to match the socio-cultural realities and understandings of the
users. Only once this is done does the implementation occur. It has also been suggested that when planning educational innovation, it is important to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the existing ideas and practices of teaching and “whether the proposed change can build on them” (Wedell, 2009, p. 22), as well as the potential “gains and losses” (Dushku, 1998, p. 371).

Such a pre-implementational baseline study can also be used to determine whether there is a need and demand for the innovation in the local context. This is significant for two main reasons. First, according to Nation and Macalister (2010), it is easier to implement a change if there is dissatisfaction with the status quo and a perceived need for change. Thus, it ensures success (Fullan, 2003a) and sustainability (Vesisenaho & Dillon, 2013) of innovation. To do this, White (1988, p. 144) suggests asking questions such as: “Do we actually need it?” “Can we give a principled justification for the innovation?”, leading to the key question “Why?” (i.e., why to change?). Second, this approach helps avoid pro-innovation bias (Rogers, 2003) – that is, an assumption that a particular innovation must be adopted in a particular context. Instead, it reflects a post-method approach in language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006) that does not accept any method as superior or universal, but provides teachers with a number of research-based principles to choose from according to their particular context.

To that end, a more ecological approach to implementation can be achieved by designing curriculum innovation around the needs and wants of teachers and learners (Kennedy, 2013). To ascertain these, Nation and Macalister (2010) and Waters and Vilches (2001) suggest the use of needs analysis. Such an approach to the pre-implementation study is particularly pertinent to TBLT as Needs Analysis is the very foundation used to inform syllabus development and task design (see Sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). The way this can also be used to inform a context-appropriate implementation of TBLT is described in the following section.
3.3.5. Summary

An ecological approach to educational change reflects a growing understanding of the impact of contextual factors on the success of educational change. In particular, it posits that change implementation should take into account a number of influences on the local environment, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, an ecological approach to change combines top-down and bottom-up models of innovation, and recognises global and local influences. Acknowledging and building on the local values and practices can result in a sense of ownership by the stakeholders, which in turn is facilitative of successful and sustainable change.

Further, it has been argued that for such a context-appropriate change to take place, adaptation (i.e., adjustment to the local context) should precede adoption. To do this, local demand for change should be established, and the prospective advantages and disadvantages of the innovation should be identified.

In general, contextual influences on the implementation are acknowledged in TBLT literature and research. Previous research has focused on curriculum design, teachers’ and learners’ influences on task design and practice, and cultural aspects of the FL contexts. The negative outcomes of top-down implementation of TBLT have been documented, and suggestions for practitioners’ training, involvement in decision-making, and support with resources and materials have been made.

However, whilst the importance of the teacher’s role in the process of innovation is well recognized in the TBLT literature, research about change management in relation to TBLT remains very limited. Empirical studies reveal that teachers continue experiencing significant challenges with this approach, and often do not implement a task-based approach in their classroom, despite the expectations from educational leaders that they will. Whilst there is a need for both top-down and bottom-up methods of implementing change, only the case reported by Najjari (2014) in Iranian setting seems to have incorporated both.

Further, despite numerous calls to combine TBLT principles with local features, there is a dearth of research documenting this. Adopting an ecological approach means the need to consider an array of local factors (e.g., existing curriculum, facilities, teacher beliefs). In addition, to date, TBLT implementational research has
approached the issues retrospectively, after the change has taken place – there is a clear need to investigate whether TBLT is appropriate for a particular educational context prior to implementation.

3.4. Needs Analysis (NA) for change management

An overarching goal of NA is to make teaching relevant, or in other words, to contextualize it. Long (2005b) explains the necessity for a NA based on the large variety of settings and purposes for which languages are learned. He compares NA to the type of medical examination required in order to prescribe an appropriate and effective treatment. When this is not done, Long (2015, p. 88) refers to such arrangement as “teaching the language, not the students.” In other words, it is not sufficient for teachers just to know the target language – it is also crucial for them to understand how the language will be used in the specific target context of the learners (Belcher, 2006; Oliver et al., 2013). In addition, developing a relevant course in response to a NA can result in an increase in student motivation to learn the target language as they will have understanding of what they have learned, how to use it and why this might be useful (Lambert, 2010; Oliver & Grote, 2016).

Since the time it was first applied as a part of course planning, NA has changed and expanded in terms of its use and scope. This section traces the development of NA, and then focuses on a particular type concerned with the wider context of implementation, namely Means Analysis (MA). Thus the second part of this section provides an overview of the methodological options for a pre-implementational MA, arguing that this should be done using an ethnographic approach.

3.4.1. The development of NA

NA was initially used to aid English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. In these early endeavours, subject area specialists were involved in the process of course design with the aim of providing relevant occupational language teaching. Next, NA was applied to the teaching of academic language, or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Since then, a number of NAs have been conducted and published in the field of ESP/EAP (e.g., Boswood & Marriott, 1994; Holliday, 1995; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999;
Despite attempts to use NA for general second language learning, this application remains limited (West, 1994). This can be attributed to the lower awareness of specific needs in such settings compared to those of ESP/EAP (Cowling, 2007; Seedhouse, 1995); the lack of skills among teachers to incorporate the results it provides in their practice (Seedhouse, 1995); and challenges to produce one program that would suit a heterogeneous group of students in a large-sized institution (Lambert, 2010). However, awareness about the utility of NA in general language courses is increasing due, in part, to the spread of CLT (Seedhouse, 1995) and TBLT (Long, 2015).

There are examples of NA undertaken with adult learners – university students and employees. For example, Cowling (2007) reported on the needs and desires of languages learners in his study undertaken at a Japanese company. He focused in particular on Business English as the common need for the learners’ professional careers. However, undertaking a NA for school aged students can be more challenging because their future options in terms of language use might be too broad. Even so, Long (2005b) argues that while some might claim there are no clear needs at this stage of education, it is still possible to draw on trends in terms of educational, societal, familial and social needs to make some predictions about the requirement for such a teaching program. Ellis and Shintani (2013, p. 140) suggest language tasks for school students need to meet three criteria, namely “(1) topic familiarity, (2) intrinsic interest, and (3) topic relevancy,” referring to Prabhu’s (1987) use of the topics related to the curriculum and school life.

Of the few NAs undertaken with school children, most have been in the second language context. For instance, Van Avermaet and Gysen (2006) describe both adult and child needs in a study based in Flanders. Their participants were migrants whose needs were to survive, get education and socialise in their new home country. Similarly, Oliver et al. (2009) looked at school children in Australia who were migrants (African refugees), and their needs were assessed partly with a view towards their prospective employment in the host country. In a more recent series of
studies, Oliver et al. (2013) examined the language and literacy needs of Aboriginal students living in remote Australia who had English as a second language or dialect. They conducted a NA to inform the design of task-based vocational training that would be more appropriate for these students. Based on observations, interviews and document analysis, guidelines were provided regarding the relevant types of tasks and cross-cultural interactions to be incorporated into the course.

Very few studies have looked at NA in a FL school context. One example is that by Shintani (2011) – a study of a NA-based TBLT to benefit young learners in a private English language school in Japan. Seedhouse’s (1995) study provided an example of surveying school students in Spain about their FL needs. The data were then used to inform course development, with the aim of making it more engaging for the students. However, more research on the opportunities for NA within public school education would be of a particular importance in the contexts where teachers are not given much freedom to change and experiment with the curriculum materials, and educational systems with stronger centralization, such as those in many post-communist societies.

Approaches in NA

Over time NA has developed in scope. It is no longer just within the remit of course designers, more recently the sources to obtain information have broadened. Whilst initially NAs were comprised only of target situations that were then incorporated into a syllabus, they now include identification not only of the language and skills to be learned, but also of different roles, “beliefs, practices, ways of speaking, and cultures” (Long, 2005b, p. 2). Thus, in addition to language audits, NA embraces such aspects as learning strategies, teaching means, and possible constraints (West, 1994). There has also been a focus on very specific language (e.g., Brecht & Rivers, 2005), such as the language needed for different vocations (Oliver, Grote, Rochecouste, & Exell, 2012).

Other NAs have focused specifically on the social aspects of language learning. For instance, Holmes (2005) investigated small talk in the workplace to determine the
socio-linguistic skills required for successful workplace adjustment with a view to incorporating these into the language course. Over a number of years, she and her colleagues recorded, transcribed and analysed a number of workplace interactions and looked at the types of small talk used by migrant workers and their co-workers with an intellectual disability, defined related skills, and developed activities that could be used to introduce and practise these. Another example is a study by Boswood and Marriott (1994) who used an ethnographic approach in the form of classroom observation to investigate the process of socialisation of new ESP teachers into their professional field. In a similar vein, Seedhouse’s (1995) NA focused on psychological rather than linguistic needs of his students, linking the findings about their motivation with their social needs and using this information for materials design.

NA that takes a social focus often considers the issue of power relationships. It gives rise to questions such as: “Who should decide what language needs are?” (West, 1994, p. 6), “Who asks what questions?” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, as cited in Tajino et al., 2005, p. 29), and “Whose needs will be represented?” (Belcher, 2006; Oliver et al., 2013; Oliver & Grote, 2016). As a result, there have been calls to combine global and local needs in NA (Belcher, 2006, p. 134) and involve insiders’ views (Long, 2005a), as well as to consider these from an outsiders’ perspective in order to balance power relationships (Belcher, 2006, p. 143). In fact, the majority of current approaches to NA see learners as individuals with clear needs that they can identify (Oliver et al., 2013; Seedhouse, 1995; Van Avermaet & Gysen, 2006), and the call to incorporate teachers’ perspectives on these needs has also been made (e.g., Holliday, 1994b). In these ways such an approach reflects glocalization and adaptation as outlined in the change management literature (see Section 3.3 above). The type of NA that focuses on contextual issues more closely is Means Analysis, also referred to as ecological analysis (Swales, 1989), which is described in detail next.
Means analysis (MA) is one type of NA, but goes beyond examining the learner’s needs and focuses on the wider context of teaching and learning. It is specifically relevant to the present study because it is based on the belief that “language needs cannot be separated from the social context in which they play a role” (Holliday, 1995, p. 126). It focuses on such aspects as location, facilities, timing, available resources and methods, and culture (West, 1994, p. 4). For example, a comprehensive model of NA for curriculum design developed by Nation and Macalister (2010), apart from needs, principles and goals, also included an analysis of the teaching environment. Likewise, Richards (1990, p. 2) suggested “situation analysis” that includes an investigation of resources and facilities, a description of the learners, the teachers, their experiences and preferences, and assessment procedures. According to Long (2015), this approach allows for the development of a better match between the syllabus design and local teaching, which in turn helps it to be more readily accepted, leading potentially to more successful outcomes. Therefore, MA is concerned with the contextual factors that may impact on the success or failure of the educational change or innovation (Purpura & Graziano-King, 2004).

Another distinctive feature of MA is that it treats potential constraints identified during such investigations as possibilities – ways to design a more appropriate curriculum (Holliday, 1995; Swales, 1989). While Munby (1978), for instance, simply outlines such constraints after the description of the curriculum, MA examines them as factors to be considered in the decision-making process. In other words, the FLT context is seen as contributing to the rationale for innovation rather than being deficient or restrictive (Holliday, 1994a).

To date there are few published MA studies. Of the published work available, MA is usually included within the bigger picture of a complex NA. For instance, in his study at a university in Sudan, Markee (1986) noted that it would have been inappropriate to rely on a survey about learners’ needs as the answers would be restricted by the questions. In order to see what was really happening in the institution as opposed to what was said or expected to be happening in terms of
language use, he utilized informal conversations and document analysis, in addition to the use of a survey. Purpura & Graziano-King (2004) also extended a survey of student needs to include an examination of relevant “FL policies, resource issues, organizational structures, and suggestions for program improvement” (p. 25). They revealed concerns about the type of instruction that occurred, such as classroom management, the quality of the tests, and the courses in terms of financing and connection to practice, as well as miscommunication between the various departments involved in the program. Similarly, Brecht and Rivers (2005) in the United States also looked at language needs beyond classroom or workplace, doing so at the level of society, and reflecting such issues as social justice, and cost and benefit. Their focus was informed by their understanding of the wider social context and by adoption of the economic model based on the constructs of demand and supply. They emphasized the importance of making connections between language and social values in order to motivate policy changes.

Jasso-Aguilar (1999) investigated the needs of hotel maids in Waikiki using participant observations, unstructured interviews and questionnaires. She was an active participant in the research, joining the training course provided for the maids. This allowed Jasso-Aguilar to not only elicit the language used by the maids in their everyday routines, but also to describe their working day and training practices, which provided a valuable understanding of their work and requirements. By taking this approach she was able to verify certain stereotypes held by others about this job and discover a number of new issues not previously identified and, therefore, not included in the training course, such as non-typical interactions and additional situations where the maids needed to use English.

The studies described above are suggestive of different types of methodology used in NA and in the few MA that have been identified in the literature. In order to explain the choice of a research approach for the present study this discussion is extended below.
3.4.3. Methodological options

As the types of needs examined by way of NA and the number of sources involved have increased, so too have the methods used to collect relevant data. Methods used range from tests and questionnaires to interviews, lesson observations, diary analysis, and case studies (West, 1994). In addition to these, Long (2005a) also describes the use of role plays, simulations, and ethnography, as well as various types of analysis of data, such as content, discourse, genre, and computer-based analyses. Macalister (2012) reports on a study that employed narrative frames for the purpose of analysis.

In addition to the use of multiple methods, Long (2005a) advocates for triangulation in data collection (and analysis) as imperative to a thorough NA. He emphasises the need for a combination of different measures and careful ordering to obtain better quality data. He suggests this can be achieved: by sources, by methods, or a combination of both. Supporting this proposition, J. D. Brown (2009) indicates that different methods in NA should not be used or added blindly, but should be complementary to each other and ordered with care. He describes seven ways of achieving data triangulation in NA as follows:

- data triangulation (using multiple types of procedures),
- investigator triangulation (using multiple needs analysts),
- theory triangulation (using multiple conceptual frameworks),
- methodological triangulation (using multiple data gathering procedures),
- interdisciplinary triangulation (using the perspectives of multiple disciplines),
- time triangulation (using multiple data gathering occasions), and
- location triangulation (using multiple locations).

(p. 283)

Indeed, there have been a number of studies that have illustrated the role of triangulation for enhancing the validity and reliability of data. For instance, Lambert (2010) utilized job records, interviews and surveys in order to determine the L2 needs of university students and create a more focused course. His interviews were informed by ethnography, which helped him to arrange these in a way to “activate the informants’ background knowledge and put them in a position of authority before asking target questions” (p. 103). Lambert found that the way students perceived their needs in terms of the future use of English did not match the information...
collected about the after-study paths of the graduates at that time. Therefore, the use of only one of these sources would have provided only a partial, if not a distorted picture of the needs. Similarly, Cowling (2007) employed interviews and questionnaires, and involved the client, students, lecturers, and employees to ensure triangulation in his NA undertaken with Japanese company workers. To collect data on the language needs of students in Journalism, Gilabert (2005) used interviews with scholars, company representatives and domain experts; he then compiled and utilized questionnaires and conducted site visits (workplace observations). The use of triangulation helped him achieve a more holistic understanding of the target tasks.

In another study, Oliver et al. (2009) employed qualitative methods such as focus group interviews and open-ended questionnaires to investigate the needs of African background students in Australia. They included not only teachers, students, and principals, but also parents, teacher assistants, staff at Migrant Resource Centre, NGO officers, and a youth worker. This was done in an attempt to provide a more holistic picture of the students’ needs, including those related to their educational, physical, emotional and family-related wellbeing.

Where the larger cultural context has been the focus, this required a more sophisticated approach to data collection. An example of the use of such as combination of methods occurred in a study by Oliver et al. (2013) focused on language needs of Australian Aboriginal vocational training students. The use of observations helped researchers gain a better internal understanding of how the school and workplace operate, which teaching techniques and resources are used and how, as well as how knowledge is applied in practice. They also surveyed learning resources and analysed the Job Guide available on the Internet and included multiple perspectives from students, lecturers, employers and community members. To elicit these perspectives, they adopted a methodology that first allowed them to build a rapport with the participants through the use of a culture-specific method called “yarning.” Yarning is an Aboriginal concept that refers to interactions based on the values rooted in the Aboriginal worldview. This approach helped reveal some underlying cultural issues such as a concept of shame that Aboriginal people experience when speaking to a non-Aboriginal person and, therefore, the
recommendation was made to tackle the issues of self-esteem. It also revealed the need for soft skills development in terms of knowledge about the workplace culture. Oliver et al. (2013) emphasize the crucial role of relationship development and gaining cultural understanding prior to data collection in order to increase validity, reliability and trustworthiness.

While quantitative or mixed methods designs are still predominant in MAs in FLT settings (Carless, 2012), it is suggested that naturalistic methods, and in particular ethnography, are more appropriate for the purposes of MA (Carless, 2012; Holliday, 1994b; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999). The reason for this is that the categories should arise from the target context rather than being imported and imposed as can be the case in survey research (Holliday, 1994b; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999; Tudor, 2003). Ethnography is a context-embedded research methodology that uses qualitative methods, such as observation, interviews and document analysis, and is focused on the local group(s) of people and their shared culture (Holliday, 1994a, 1994b; Van Maanen, 2011). It accommodates understanding of contexts and addresses the pitfalls of cross-cultural research. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of ethnography, its core concepts of culture and thick description, and the potential benefits it provides for research about language teaching.

### 3.4.4. Ethnographic focus: Culture and context

As a research method, ethnography originates from anthropology. It developed from the branch of anthropology called ethnology that focused on the study of people and cultures (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). At first this was done by scholars distanced from the objects of their study through the use of various mediums of information, such as books and stories from travellers. In the early 20th century, this approach was changed when Malinovski and Radcliffe-Brown emphasized the need to experience cultures firsthand (Gobo, 2008). As a result, this methodology became known as both the experience of and a consequent description of foreign (non-Western) communities and cultures. Due to its links to sociology, and in particular through the works of the so-called Chicago School (Chicago University students),
focus of ethnography was extended from exotic cultures to the complexity and
exoticism of one’s own culture (Van Maanen, 2011).

Ethnography contrasts with positivistic research approaches in that it is based on
naturalism, where phenomenon is in the centre not the methods. To that end, human
behaviour is seen as not merely caused by some stimuli, but guided by “social or
cultural meanings… intentions, motives, beliefs, rules, discourses, and values”
(Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 7). In order to understand these meanings, it is
imperative to learn about the culture of the participants.

Culture in ethnography

Culture is not something tangible or easily definable. However, Van Maanen (2011)
explains that for the purposes of research, culture can be defined as a shared
knowledge of those who are studied, a group or community members, that
determines their behaviour. This knowledge is evident through what these people say
and do. An ethnographer needs to listen and observe and record what he heard and
saw during their fieldwork. In this way, culture is “made visible through its
representation” (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 3). Therefore, culture is not only what is
represented, but also the way it is represented.

In general, ethnographic practices are based on the view that experience is at the
foundation of our knowledge and understanding about the social world (Van
Maanen, 2011). For some, this understanding is gained mainly from observation
because there is often a mismatch between what people say and what they do (Gobo,
2008). For others, it is the interpretation by the participants of what has been
observed (Spradley, 1979) because they see the goal of ethnography as the
description of culture from the point of view of its natives. In other words, it implies
learning from the participants instead of treating them as a mere object of study. Yet
for others it is a combination of various methods, which in turn is done to achieve
triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). For Wedell (2009), for instance, the
way to understand teachers’ reality and thinking is “by talking to them and observing
their reality” (p. 23). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) and Tudor (2003) suggest
that an ethnographic study should have a flexible design and use multiple sources for data collection.

At the same time, Geertz (1973) argues that ethnography is not defined by the procedures the researcher performs, but by the creation of thick description. Providing an example of Gilbert Ryle’s winking boys, he illustrates how many different meanings can be hidden behind such a simple movement. He claims it would not be possible to distinguish between the nervous contraction of the eyelids, an act of conspiracy, and a mimicking with the use of logic or statistics. Instead, this should be addressed with a deeper inquiry, including participants’ interpretations and cultural background. He indicates that thick description is an integral part of an ethnographic endeavour, based on “inference and implication” (p. 7). An interpretation cannot stay independent of its context. A thick description is one that takes the reader “into the heart” of what is being described (Geertz, 1973, p. 18). Therefore, whatever the approach is, one common component of ethnographic studies is what is called “thick description” as outlined next.

**Thick description**

In thick description the relationships between the micro and macro context are addressed (Watson-Gegeo, 1992). In other words, thick description is characterised by being simultaneously “microscopic” and relating to the wider context (Geertz, 1973, p. 21). This is demonstrated in a study by Watson-Gegeo (1992) who looked at school children in village schools in the Solomon Islands in order to determine the reason for their poor educational achievement. She not only examined classroom discourse, but also the language used for socialisation within families. She also conducted institutional analysis by interviewing school staff and educational authorities, undertook document analysis, and did a literature review. She found that low academic achievement in children was mainly attributed to the wider issues in society connected to the educational system, in particular poor resourcing and fear of failure in the national examinations.
Within the framework of the micro and macro contexts, a decision should be made
regarding what to include in the thick description. O’Reilly (2005) argues one should
study what is exotic as well as what is routine about the culture, and the participants’
perspective on both. The number of categories developed to reach the thick
description is determined by the notion of saturation which helps define the
boundaries in the study (Watson-Gegeo, 1992). As a result, ethnography is expected
to produce a “layered and evocative, socially and historically conditioned,
presentation of located aspects of the human condition from the inside” (Willis &
Trondman, 2000, p. 7, emphasis in the original).

The micro and macro contexts and the links between them explored within an
ethnographical approach inform the current study as they allow for careful and
detailed examination of an ecological approach to change. In addition, such an
approach facilitates analysis of contextual factors pertinent to the classroom,
institution, system and culture, deemed to facilitate the development of appropriate
language methodologies (Nunan, 1995).

One of the key weaknesses of such descriptions, as pointed out in the literature, is
that although they seek to represent voices of the participants, it is still the researcher
who makes interpretive descriptions and selects the quotes. This may mean that the
results depend to a large extent on the characteristics of a researcher (Long, 1980).
For instance, one’s personal and professional background may influence not only the
choices of where to look and what to record, but also how to represent what is
learned, which words, metaphors and genre or style to use (Van Maanen, 2011).
Further, the interpretations of the data may also depend on one’s personal
experiences as well as academic environments (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Instead
of ignoring or denying their influence, many ethnographers utilize reflexivity and
critical ethnography to address these issues as described next.

**Reflexivity and critical ethnography**

Reflexive writing may be used to account for and describe the influence and
positioning of the researcher in the field. It is employed as a way to address bias and
question interpretations (Bott, 2010). Thus, it allows for conclusions that were not pre-determined and in some cases not expected (Holliday, 2010). In fact, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that the challenges that ethnographers face in the field and the response they receive can provide insights that might be as important as the other data, thus serving the primary goal of any research – that is to produce new knowledge. Further, some traits of the researcher can be beneficial to the research, such as age and personality (O’Reilly, 2005). As such, admitting one’s influence on the fieldwork and the field through reflexivity does not undermine but rather completes attempts to do rigorous research (O’Reilly, 2005).

A critical approach to ethnography in particular is concerned with how what is observed reflects power relationships (Willis & Trondman, 2000). It acknowledges that knowledge is power, and so it is incumbent upon the ethnographer to think carefully about the impact of their research (Spradley, 1979). It incorporates post-modern thinking that there is no one objective truth, but that reality is co-constructed (Holliday, 2010), and therefore it is essential that a qualitative researcher addresses bias and preconceptions they bring into the research, and combine emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspective (Davis, 1995). It is an attempt to address and deal with research issues such as inequality and hierarchy in power relations (Bott, 2010; Hertz, 1997) – the issues relevant to the current study as described in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 above.

The advantages of an ethnographic approach for TBLT implementation research

Ethnography is not a new approach in Applied Linguistics. In fact, it has been argued that ethnography provides numerous benefits for fieldwork in this area. First, it helps create a holistic picture of teaching and learning, which facilitates better understanding by connecting these to wider social and cultural issues. While ethnographers are guided by theory, they also look beyond, which means they can see the gaps and inconsistencies in theories. The focus on culture in ethnography has an explanatory role in the classroom from the wider socio-cultural perspective. In other words, it investigates the aspects of language teaching pertinent to the field in their “rich” and “multi-level” contexts (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p. 588). As a result, it
helps increase understanding of relationships between school achievement and norms within communities, and between different aspects of language education and politics (Davis, 1995). It facilitates understanding in the long-term, helping unveil change that occurs over time, due to its dedication to the longitudinal and systematic character (Davis, 1995).

Ethnography also assists in the collection of important data that cannot be quantified (Courtney, 1988). For instance, it provides guidance of “where to look” during the development of a project based on categories emerging from the experiences of the context (Holliday, 1990, p. 82). Holliday (1990) describes the application of the soft systems methodology in the process of development of ELT projects, and argues in favour of the preliminary ethnographic study that can provide an understanding of where the problem lies, or in other words, where to begin the project. He argues that this approach is the best match for this purpose because it enables co-construction, is ecologically sensitive and wide in scope. This, he argues, will help develop good understanding of the context where the project is to take place, and develop categories and strategies for further research that better reflect the local situation, compared to those imposed from the outside.

In addition, the use of ethnography can facilitate the development of a dialogue with the local stakeholders (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999). Further, Belcher (2006) argues that a critical perspective can be undertaken to empower marginalised groups. In particular, she provides examples of studies involving elicitation of the learners’ opinion in contexts where these learners were perceived as inferior or vulnerable, such as maids, immigrant workers, women, or children. For instance, in Holliday’s (1995) study the use of ethnography allowed him to learn about the culture of the institution (an oil company) and interpret needs of the workers in the context of this culture, making the results meaningful to all the local stakeholders. He employed qualitative interviews, observation of workplace interactions and analysis of artefacts such as samples of work-related writing. Although he had to operate within a limited timeframe, his findings indicated the key areas of language-related challenge and helped identify which type of training was needed for both the local staff and foreign colleagues employed in this company. Moreover, the resulting language program had
significant social implications and provided possibilities for nationalization of the company.

To this end, ethnography appears to be the most appropriate method to research ecological implementation of educational change. First, it is contextualized through the focus on people and their shared culture. Second, it considers various contextual factors through the interrelations between micro and macro contexts depicted in the form of thick description. Third, it allows for the critical perspective that encourages the researcher to acknowledge and address their bias and decrease the possibility of imposing ideas from the outside. Further, it provides participants with the opportunity for their voice to be heard, and at the same time opens opportunities for change. Taking this emic or local perspective and combining it with the etic perspective of the researcher empowers teachers and learners to become active co-constructors of the research narrative (Davis, 1995). Hence, it provides an opportunity to combine top-down and bottom-up management of the innovation, and to implement a glocalization perspective, which adapts to meet the requirements of local stakeholders. Finally, it can be used to inform the project or innovation from the very beginning – reflecting a pre-adoptive approach.

3.4.5. Summary

Investigating the development and expanding of NA, this section provides three key insights into the possibilities of its use for ecological change management as described in Section 3.3. First, it is clear that NA has developed in scope to include a number of factors other than linguistic items or target situations, accommodating socio-cultural components such as roles, strategies, and means. Although mainly used for the development of ESP and EAP courses, and with adult learners, the use of NA for general teaching and school curricula in particular has also been discussed. Second, a type of NA called Means Analysis (MA) has been used to facilitate contextualization of new curricula. Third, MA can be undertaken before the needs are investigated and the project is designed and implemented. That is, it is a pre-adoption or pre-implementation tool for innovation adjustment. This makes it an appropriate vehicle for investigating the possibilities of an ecological implementation of TBLT – the goal of the current study.
Fitting within this framework is an ethnographic approach. Central to this is the opportunity to ‘give voice’ to the participants, describe connections between the micro and micro context of these stakeholders through thick description, and employ critical perspective to address power relations and reflexivity to reveal potential bias. This is the research approach that informs the present study, a description of which is detailed in the next chapter.

3.5. Chapter summary

Grounded in research and empirical evidence, and developed to overcome the shortcomings of the previous language teaching practices, TBLT has been promoted for adoption in a number of educational settings and countries. Although it is argued to be adaptive, flexible, and so potentially appropriate, those involved in its implementation continue to face many challenges and misunderstandings. From the literature on change management it is clear that there is a need for a better understanding of how TBLT interplays with the context of implementation in order for successful implementation to be achieved. In particular, avenues for combination of bottom-up and top-down, global and local aspects of this change should be explored before the process of adoption begins. This can be done within the framework of Means Analysis, and in particular, by the application of a holistic, ethnographic approach.

To inform a contextually-appropriate or ecological innovation, such a study should investigate methodologies previously applied in the setting (West, 1994). It also requires information about whether the local stakeholders see the need for a change (Fullan, 1999; Nation & Macalister, 2010), and in particular, about teacher beliefs regarding the lacks and necessities (Nation & Macalister, 2010), needs and problems of the current situation (Vesisenaho & Dillon, 2013). As a result, it should inform whether the proposed change can build on the existing perceptions and attitudes (Tudor, 2003) and practices (Wedell, 2009).

In order to address these issues, it is imperative for this study to first investigate and provide thick description of the current FLT curriculum and practices in schools in
post-Soviet Ukraine. Then, informed by insights from educational change management, it needs to look at: a) potential gains (Dushku, 1998; Kennedy, 1988) or benefits of the reform (Yan & He, 2012); and b) potential losses (Dushku, 1998; Kennedy, 1988) and barriers (Swales, 1989). Therefore, the following Research Questions have been developed for the present study: 1) What are the current FLT curriculum and practices in schools in post-Soviet Ukraine? 2) Are there potential benefits of implementing TBLT in school FLT contexts in Ukraine? 3) What challenges are associated with the prospective implementation of TBLT in Ukrainian schools?
Chapter 4: Method

4.1. Overview

This chapter describes the research method used in the current study. First, the research paradigm that guides the study and the research methodology are described. Second, conceptualization of the research context is outlined and the research design is explained. Next, a description is given of each of the three consecutive phases including information about the site, the participants, data collection methods, materials, and the procedures for the data analysis. Finally, the quality control mechanisms and ethical issues are explained.

4.2. Research paradigm

This study is an exploration of FLT practices, policies, and innovation, guided by interpretivism and a constructivist ontology. It is an exploratory qualitative study informed by ethnography and innovation theory (as outlined in the Literature Review).

Interpretivism posits that human actions need interpretation (Schwandt, 2000) in relation to the context in which they take place (Cumming, 1994). The belief that these interpretations differ from one person to another is the foundation of a constructivist ontology (Guba, 1990). In line with these views, the intention of this study is not only to look at language or language teaching approaches, but to investigate how local stakeholders such as teachers, teacher educators and policy makers make sense of these approaches, and how this relates to the wider socio-cultural context of teaching.

This research employs ethnography to enable a thick description of context based on first-hand experience and interaction (Creswell, 2013). Here, an ethnographic approach can also help establish an “understanding of how schools work” (Kelly & Majerus, 2012, p. 48) specifically in the FLT context in Ukraine. Further, ethnography facilitates understanding of the diversity of cultures and enables cross-
cultural comparisons (Spradley, 1979), which is relevant to the case of cross-cultural transfer of innovations – the focus of this study. Moreover, taking an ethnographic approach allows the voices of the participants to be “heard” so that along with the researcher’s interpretations, readers can make their own conclusions. It is important that these voices are distinct from those of the researcher(s) (Gullion, 2015).

The present qualitative study draws from both realist ethnography and critical ethnography. The realist ethnographical part of the study includes the description of the educational system and its components, and analysis of policies that provide mainly pragmatic information, represented in a “third-person dispassionate voice” (Creswell, 2013, p. 93). At the same time, as it looks closely at the issues of educational change, including gaps and needs of the current FLT context as described by local stakeholders, it challenges the status quo, and therefore integrates features of critical ethnography (Creswell, 2013, pp. 93-95). Adopting a critical approach, this study incorporates reflexive accounts of the researcher (as explained and illustrated in Section 4.8 below). Similar to critical ethnographers who utilize various disciplines to contextualize and interpret their data (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 129), this study integrates innovation theory from the field of change management to address the issues of cross-cultural innovation transfer in FLT.

4.3. Conceptualization of the research context

According to Watson-Gegeo (1992, p. 53), context is a “set of relationships in which a phenomenon is situated,” and can be depicted in the form of co-centric circles representing factors that impact at the micro and macro levels. Similarly, Holliday (1994a, p. 13) describes how the context of language teaching can be conceptualized as the macro context or “the wider societal and institutional influences on what happens in the classroom,” and the micro context which focuses on the aspects of the classroom. In public schooling the differences between institutional context and systemic context are blurred as individual schools follow the rules and regulations prescribed by the Ministry (Nunan, 1995).
Based on this conceptualization, the present study explores the current FLT context and change implications for Ukraine at two levels: macro and micro, as illustrated diagrammatically below (Figure 4.1). In this study, macro context is seen as a combination of socio-cultural and systemic (i.e., educational system) influences that are reflected in policies, the official and compulsory curriculum, centrally promoted resources and methodologies, and culturally-based beliefs about teaching and learning. The micro context is at the level of the classroom where the influences of the macro context are transformed into classroom practices including the setting, resources, activities, teacher and student roles, and ways of assessment.

**Figure 4.1.** Macro and micro contexts of the FLT in public schools in Ukraine

### 4.4. Research design

This study was designed to answer the Research Questions as outlined above. The design also reflects the qualitative ethnographic and longitudinal nature of the research. Specifically, data were collected during two field trips. The main trip took place in 2013-2014 and lasted for five months, and the follow-up trip was undertaken in 2015 and was conducted over two months. Whilst the key elements of the study were set before the data collection began, the design remained flexible and on-going adjustments were made based on the data collected and the findings that emerged. In
other words, it followed the iterative-inductive nature of ethnography (O’Reilly, 2005).

First, the macro and micro contexts of the current FLT situation in Ukraine were investigated. As the preliminary analysis of these data revealed that TBLT tasks were not used in this context and the majority of teachers reported that they had never heard about this teaching approach, it appeared impossible to elicit practitioner perspectives on the prospective benefits and drawbacks of TBLT (Research Questions 2 and 3). Therefore, in order to provide an emic or insider perspective on the potential pros and cons of this language teaching approach in Ukrainian schools, it was necessary to probe into teacher perceptions about TBLT in an alternative way. To do this, in the second phase of the study a presentation about TBLT was given by the researcher and teacher feedback was collected. In their feedback, the participants referred to some of the existing practices as similar to tasks. To that end, a closer look at these practices was needed, which was achieved through case studies of three teachers providing an insight into three different micro contexts (see Figure 4.1).

As a result, the study comprised three consecutive phases, where the data obtained in each phase was analysed and used to guide the development of the next phase. Figure 4.2 below shows the link between the different phases and between these and the Research Questions.

**Figure 4.2. Design of the research study: Phases**
Further, the second field trip allowed not only for Phase 3 data to be collected, but also to revisit the participants of the previous phases, which was essential for three reasons. First, it enabled the researcher to address a number of gaps and inconsistencies that appeared in the data. Second, it further enhanced the process of co-construction of the narrative about FLT in Ukraine by giving the stakeholders an opportunity to look through the findings and express their agreement or disagreement and to add what they deemed to be missing. Third, it allowed for member-checking as described in Section 4.8 below. As a result, the research included four steps as illustrated in the Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3. Design of the research study: Four steps

It should be noted here that Steps 3 and 4 did not aim to identify whether or how teachers implemented tasks in their classrooms following the TBLT presentation given in Phase 2. As can be seen from the Literature Review (Section 3.3), educational change is a complex process and so it was not expected that one workshop would be sufficient to create a notable difference. Rather, the TBLT presentation was used to elicit teacher perceptions about an innovation, and then in-depth case studies were conducted to investigate the issues raised in focus group discussions with these teachers.

The details about the research site, participants, materials, and the procedures of data collection and analysis are described below phase by phase.
4.5. Phase 1

Given that the study sought to provide a better understanding of potential educational change that should be contextually appropriate for Ukraine, the first and most extensive phase of data collection was dedicated to the investigation of the current FLT policies and practices in that country. Understanding the context in this study is as important as determining the benefits and challenges of a prospective change, therefore it is described in detail, including relationships between the micro and macro contexts. This reflects an ethnographic approach that sets “to describe what happens, how the people involved see and talk about their actions and those of others, the contexts in which the action takes place, and what follows from it” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 7).

It is argued that the information about the context being studied can be derived from three sources, namely, “1) from what people say; 2) from the way people act; and 3) from the artefacts people use” (Spradley, 1979, p. 8). Therefore, corresponding methods such as 1) interviews and focus groups; 2) lesson observations; and 3) document analysis (including policy documents, textbooks and teacher-produced lesson plans) were used in this study to collect data. Furthermore, data derived from interviews comprise not only the words of the participants, but their response to the questions and a description of the interview process itself (Silverman, 2006). This includes instances when teachers were willing to participate but did not wish to be recorded at all, when they omitted answers to certain questions or when they tried to lead the interview in the direction that they considered more appropriate for the topic than the questions being asked. At other times, there were participants who were welcoming of the research and the researcher (e.g., inviting the researcher for a cup of tea in the school staffroom) and were eager to know more about the study as well as the researcher’s experience in a foreign university. All these and other responses are also situated within the cultural interpretive domain, which is essential to consider in order that a thick description be provided.
4.5.1. Context

The study was conducted in public primary and secondary schools in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, and in Kyiv regional areas. In Ukraine, primary school includes years one to four (6 to 9 years of age), basic secondary school includes years five to nine (10 to 14 years of age), and upper secondary school includes years ten and eleven (15 to 16 years of age). These age groups are usually located in the same school building. Students start school at the age of six-seven years and graduate at the age of 16-17 years.

4.5.2. Participants

Eleven teachers from six different schools participated in Phase 1 of the study. As there is still much centralization in educational policies in Ukraine, the schools from which these participants were selected constitute a typical sample of the region. Teacher participants were selected from those schools that are specialised and non-specialised in FL education, as well as from city, town, and village schools. In this way, the present study used purposeful sampling, which is a common practice in qualitative research (Merkens, 2004; Patton, 2002).

The procedure of recruiting teachers from local schools involved contacting the school principal, who then liaised with the teacher in charge of the school FLT Department. If they agreed, the researcher was invited to explain the study to a few teachers in order to see whether they, too, would like to participate. Initially, it was planned to approach nine teachers, three from each of the school levels – primary, basic secondary, and upper secondary. However, as it appeared that the majority of teachers in Ukraine normally work across all levels, this classification was not used and instead a saturation sampling model (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Trotter, 2012) was adopted, where new participants were involved to the point when no new constructs emerged from the data as the same ideas were mentioned again and again.

The eleven participants represented different school types and varying teaching profiles within the same school (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1. *The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of FLT experience</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Year levels taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>specialised Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>under 25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>under 5</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>specialised Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>specialised Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>over 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>over 20</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>non-specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>non-specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>non-specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>specialised Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 10</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>gymnasium (specialised) Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 11</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>village</td>
<td>non-specialised Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four teachers were drawn from one school, two teachers from each of two other schools, and one teacher in each of the three remaining schools. All teachers participating in the study were trained in FLT (holding a degree in a relevant discipline), with a range of teaching experience. All were teachers of English (in some cases in combination with other FLs), which allowed the researcher to understand and take extensive notes on their lessons, lesson plans and materials. All
of the teachers in this phase were females, which is a typical gender situation among teachers in Ukraine – i.e., the World Bank indicate that 99 per cent of primary school teachers and 88 per cent of secondary school teachers in Ukraine between 2011 and 2015 were female (The World Bank, 2015a, 2015b). This reflects the situation in this country where the deterioration of the prestige of teaching and an unfavourable socio-economic situation has led to a decrease in male teachers (Kutsyuruba, 2011).

Apart from teachers, two teacher educators and a policy maker also participated in this first phase of the study. The teacher educators were university lecturers drawn from the main pedagogic universities and had 10 to 20 years of teaching experience at this level. A policy maker from the MOES who was involved in compilation of the FLT policies for schools was the final participant. She was included as a domain expert and, apart from the questions similar to those for teachers and teacher educators (see Appendix 1), was consulted regarding FLT policies. As this was an additional source of verification and triangulation, not a main data source for the study, only involving one policy maker was deemed sufficient. This is because in qualitative research, instead of being representative, the sample should be described in a way that its typical features are revealed, so that this can be transferable to similar contexts, and include different and unfavourable cases to achieve “the maximal possible variation” (Merkens, 2004, p. 167).

4.5.3. Materials

For the three phases of this study the materials included information letters, consent forms and demographic sheets, which were printed out for every participant. A voice recorder was used to record the interviews and focus groups with the permission of the participants. Interviews and focus group recordings were subsequently transcribed, and transcriptions were stored in Microsoft Word files using standard computer software.
4.5.4. Procedures

As this qualitative study is informed by ethnography, it includes multiple sources of data collection (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The data in this first phase were collected during two field trips (see Figure 4.3 above) using four methods as described below.

1) Document analysis

An analysis was made of state educational policies and guidelines including curricula regarding the teaching of FL which were available from a centralized website. In addition, the official report for the Council of Europe (MOES, 2010a) providing an overview of FLT in Ukraine was examined. This was carried out in conjunction with an examination of instructional resources including textbooks used in the lessons. Also collected from teachers in this phase were teacher-produced primary (n=7) and secondary (n=10) school lesson plans.

2) Observations

In this study both participant and non-participant observations were made (Spradley, 1979). During the lessons, the researcher was a non-participant observer, making an effort to not intrude into the teaching and learning process in order to find out what is going on in FLT classrooms in Ukraine. However, during her time in the field, the researcher did participate in the teacher’s work and school routines. This included sharing tea and coffee breaks, and attending: teachers’ meetings (including giving an invited speech during two of those); everyday events such as lineyka, a time during one of the breaks when students and teachers all gather in the corridor to listen to the news and sometimes receive awards; special concerts; and professional development seminars. Although only the data most relevant to the topic and questions are reported in the thesis, insights gained during these activities helped in establishing rapport with the participants and getting a better understanding of the context, which is essential to a study such as this which is informed by ethnography.

Lesson observations were undertaken to provide further information on existing practices. Nine lessons were observed in Ukraine in the first field trip, and ten more
in the second (with a total of eight lessons in primary and eleven in secondary school classrooms).

Data were collected in the form of field notes and drawings of the classroom. Field notes focused on teacher and student roles, learning activities, resources used, and the use of L1/FL, while drawings were done to represent the physical setting of the classroom (location of students’ desks, position of the teacher, the blackboard, and any other resources). Additionally, five classroom photographs were taken – with the absence of people – to show the physical layout of the classroom in more detail.

3) Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted with eleven teachers, two teacher educators and one policy maker. The interview schedules (see Appendix 1) were designed to reveal: preferred teaching approaches and methods, the teacher and student roles, and information on the type of changes/innovations (if any) they would like to try and/or to see in school FLT. Most questions for the teachers were also included in the teacher educator interviews to allow for a comparison of the responses. The majority of the participants were revisited in the follow-up stage (see Figure 4.3 above).

Open-ended questions were used to avoid imposing the researcher’s point of view as much as possible and, therefore, to allow for the participants’ own perceptions to emerge. For the purposes of thick description, apart from the main questions, both descriptive (e.g., Could you describe a typical communicative activity?) and structural questions (e.g., Can you think of any other ways an FL lesson can be organized?) (Spradley, 1979) were asked during the conversation to probe deeper into the teachers’ perceptions.

Interviews were recorded with the agreement of the participants in order to ensure accurate representation of the responses and prevent information loss. Two teachers and one of the focus group interview participants requested that interviews were not audio recorded, and in these cases hand written notes were made. Although some details from the unrecorded conversations might have been lost, the fact that some teachers were reluctant to have their ideas recorded constitutes an important aspect of the context and was included in data analysis and addressed in the discussion. The
language of the interviews and the process of translation are detailed in Section 4.5.5 below.

4) Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were made to render perceptions and interpretations of what the researcher witnessed or overheard. These contributed to the compilation of thick description essential for understanding the context and the way people make meaning of their social world (Zoe & Randall, 2012), and also included reflexive notes as described in Section 4.8 below.

4.5.5. Analysis

The official educational documents and teacher-produced lesson plans were subject to qualitative content analysis as outlined in Morgan (1993) and Silverman (2006) (i.e. allowing the codes to emerge from the data rather than using pre-determined constructs, and then interpreting and contextualizing the results rather than describing the frequencies as is the case in quantitative content analysis). Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and these were also subject to qualitative content analysis. The analysis of observational data from the lessons was based on observation protocols and field notes. This was crucial to enable the exploration of what is referred to as the classroom context (Batstone, 2012), social context of language learning (Breen, 1985) or classroom culture (Holliday, 1994a).

Various approaches to data coding were applied, including coding paragraphs, highlighting text, making notes/comments, writing summaries, looking for common points and unexpected issues (Riley, 1990). After the coding of all data was completed, the codes that had shared meaning were grouped into themes. Each theme was then located on a separate page with the quotes from different sources. Individual sentences and paragraphs of the policies, interview transcriptions, lesson plans and observation logs were then assigned a code relevant to the Research Questions of the study. For instance, there were codes such as: communicative competence, timing, Europeanization, character education, etc. For the sake of expedience and visual convenience these codes were assigned a colour to highlight
parts of the text with the same code. The meaning of these codes was further elaborated using the researcher’s own comments recorded using Microsoft Word marginal notes. For the code “teacher role,” for instance, the specifying comments could be “teacher role: motivation” or “teacher role: control,” “teacher role: role model.” More explicit comments for student-student cooperation code included “student-student cooperation: students with higher language proficiency level refuse to work in a pair with their weaker peers.” When codes were assigned, some codes were grouped to form a larger construct or a theme. For instance, “communicative competence,” “character education,” “citizenship education,” “knowledge in basic linguistics,” and “complex lesson objectives” were grouped together to form the larger construct of “multiple goals.” In some instances, the codes were grouped together to show contrast and so promote a more critical approach to the data analysis. An example of this is the description of “change/innovation,” “Europeanization,” and “pride in local FLT history” codes within the “Transformation” theme.

Content analysis of the data obtained in this phase was supplemented by the use of a constant comparative method of analysis (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). This means that after coding data for emergent themes through content analysis of each individual source (a policy text, an interview, or lesson observation), the researcher constantly went back and forth between the current and previously coded text to check if there were newly emergent themes. In the current study this method involved several steps, namely comparing codes within one single text (e.g., one interview), between two or more texts from one source (codes in different interviews), and codes obtained from different sources (e.g., those found in the interviews and those in the policies) (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). This use of constant comparison enabled the researcher “to describe and conceptualize the variety that exists within the subject under study” (Boeije, 2002, p. 393).

The iterative nature of the analysis (as described above) helped the researcher to gain deeper understanding and more complex perspective. It also facilitated the presentation of the data, by following the three stages of description, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2013) and, therefore, allowed for the thick description to be
created (Geertz, 1973). In practical terms this meant that the description of the educational system was followed by the identification and description of themes, with further and deeper interpretation of the themes across all the phases of the study.

The data obtained from various sources specified above was collected in three languages: Ukrainian, Russian, and English. For instance, all the internal FLT policies are written in Ukrainian, but a couple of the international documents referred to in this study were originally in English. All the interviews, except for one, were conducted in L1 of the participants, either Ukrainian or Russian – both being first languages of the researcher. Only one teacher educator chose to provide her answers in English. All the interviews were transcribed and the written data (interview transcriptions, documents, lesson notes and fieldnotes) were analysed and coded using the procedure outlined above – in their original language. Only when quotes chosen to be used in the thesis were in a language other than English were they translated into English by the researcher (for the examples, see Appendix 2).

The findings from this first phase of the research study are provided in two of the Findings Chapters – Chapter 5 gives a description of the Ukrainian FLT curriculum, Chapter 6 concerns the practices of FLT in Ukraine.

4.6. Phase 2

As described in Section 4.4 above, in the second phase of the study a presentation about TBLT was given by the researcher and teacher feedback was collected immediately after this by means of focus group discussions (FGD). The purpose of this phase was to provide teachers with basic information on TBLT (including video samples of students working on tasks) to reveal their receptivity towards implementing this innovation in their classrooms.

It is important to note that the teachers were not required or expected to either approve or adopt the presented approach, but rather their responses were interrogated and compared to the wider context as documented in the previous phase.
4.6.1. Context

Following the Phase 1 data collection, three of the participating schools expressed their interest in hosting the presentation on TBLT. Two of these schools were located in the city, one being a school specialised in the study of FLs and the other a non-specialised (general comprehensive) school, and one school was located in the regional town. Therefore, these schools represented three different contexts of Ukrainian FLT.

4.6.2. Participants

Eight of the teachers participating in this phase were the participants from Phase 1. The other nine participants were their colleagues who received information on the study from the researcher or line manager, and granted their consent to participate.

First, the presentation was trialled with one of the teacher participants whose school did not host the presentation. The valuable comments provided by this teacher helped shape the presentation in a more accessible way for the Ukrainian participants. With consent, some of her comments were also included in the data because they touched upon some key points mentioned by other teachers in this phase. In addition, given that this teacher was from a village school, she could add some important ideas about possible benefits and challenges of TBLT in this disadvantaged context. Next, the presentation was given in the non-specialised school in the city, and was attended and discussed by two teachers. The second presentation took part in the specialised city school and had four participants. The last presentation was held in a town school where ten teachers attended and provided their feedback.

All teachers participating in the study were trained in FLT, with a range of teaching experiences. All were teachers of English (in some cases in combination with other FLs). Further demographic information of the participants is outlined in Table 4.2 below.
### Table 4.2. The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of FLT experience</th>
<th>Year levels taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher – village school</td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGD 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Non-specialised</td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>over 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>over 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 2</td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City specialised school</td>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>over 55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>over 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 3</td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town specialised school</td>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>under 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>under 25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>under 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.3. Materials

As in Phase 1 of this study, the materials included information letters, consent forms and demographic sheets, which were printed out for every participant. A voice recorder was used to record the interviews and focus groups with the permission of the participants. In addition, a power point presentation with a video on TBLT was used in Phase 2, utilizing relevant computer software and a data projector. For this purpose, school facilities or the researcher’s own laptop were used. As indicated, the choice of the content for the presentation was guided by the TBLT literature as well as by the data collected in Phase 1. In this way, the teachers could better relate to and understand the ideas that were presented.

The participants were also shown two or three short videos (depending on the time) featuring school age students working on language tasks. These videos were taken from the following contexts: Video 1 – England (ESL), video 2 – Spain (EFL), video 3 – Australia (ESL). The video from England is available in the public domain and was obtained from an Australian library, the one from Spain was kindly provided by Professor Maria del Pilar Garcia Mayo (Universidad del Pais Vasco, Spain), and the one from Australia – by Professor Rhonda Oliver (Curtin University, WA).
4.6.4. Procedures

As a first step in this phase, teachers attended the presentation on TBLT delivered by the researcher. Task examples and especially the video of students working on tasks served as a catalyst for more in-depth feedback from the teachers.

Next, the teachers shared their ideas in focus group discussions (FGD). Each group consisted of a maximum of ten people as recommended by J. Robinson (2012). FGDs were selected in preference to individual interviews due to their time and cost saving attributes, as well as a possibility to create social context for productive discussion. Questions were written to elicit teachers’ perceptions of the material provided in presentation (see Appendix 3 for the interview questions and Appendix 4 for the Presentation outline). These questions were focused on attitudes towards the implementation of alternative FLT practices including possible pedagogical issues and teacher concerns about the adoption of these approaches.

4.6.5. Analysis

The focus group interviews were transcribed and subject to qualitative content analysis with the use of constant comparative method (as described in Section 4.5.5 above). In this phase, the responses from the teacher and all three focus groups were compared, and both similarities and differences were identified and described. Further, these data were verified during the follow-up stage (see Figure 4.3 above), where additional interviews were also transcribed and coded following the same process.

The findings from Phase 2 are provided in Chapter 7 – a chapter which focuses on the potential of tasks in current FLT in Ukraine.

4.7. Phase 3

In this last phase of the study, FLT classroom practices were elaborated by means of case studies of three teachers as described below.
4.7.1. **Context and participants**

The teachers and their classrooms selected for case studies represented three different micro contexts of the Ukrainian FLT. They were chosen on the basis of theoretical sampling (Merkens, 2004), whereby the choice of participants is guided by the data collected previously. All the lessons observed in Phase 1 were re-analysed according to the eight criteria emerging from the Literature Review (see Section 3.2.6 and Figure 4.4 below). Although none of the observed lessons reflected all these criteria, some practices appeared to display these characteristics to a larger extent than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not task-like</th>
<th>Less task-like</th>
<th>More task-like</th>
<th>Task-like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needs-based (Long, 2015)
Meaning is primary (Ellis, 2009a; Skehan, 1998)
Focus on Form (Long, 2015)
Draws on students’ own FL resources (Ellis, 2009a)
There is a “gap” that necessitates interaction (Ellis, 2009a)
Has a relationship to the real-world (Skehan, 1998)
Learner-centred/learner-directed (Long, 2015)
Non-linguistic outcome (Ellis, 2009a; Skehan, 1998)

*Figure 4.4. The TBLT framework for case selection*

Six teachers having the most, the intermediate, and the least task-like classroom practices – two each – were chosen from the original sample of eleven (of Phase 1). When approached with the information about Phase 3 of the study, two of the six teachers – one from “the most” and one from “the intermediate” categories – agreed to participate. Unfortunately, of the two teachers with “the least” task-like practices, one did not work at school anymore, and the other one experienced trauma which required her to stay at home. Thus, instead of selecting from the original sample, another teacher from a non-specialised school who met the criteria and was willing to participate was found. In this case, the snowball sampling method was utilized.
(Merkens, 2004), where the participant(s) is found through the recommendation of the other participants. As a result, unlike the first two teachers selected, the third did not participate in Phases 1 and 2 of the study. Together these cases represent the maximum variation sample (Creswell, 2013), one of the most popular approaches in qualitative research as it “increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives” (p. 157).

The three teachers represented a wide range of age, teaching experience and city/town location as well as specialised/non-specialised school context. All three teachers taught both primary and secondary school students, which facilitated observation of different ages in all three contexts. Although Teacher 3 taught two languages, English and French, only English lessons were included in the study. The demographic information for these teachers is provided in the Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3. *The demographic information of the research participants, Phase 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of FLT experience</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Year levels taught</th>
<th>Languages taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>specialised</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>specialised</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>non-specialised</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.7.2. Materials

Again for this phase the materials included information letters, consent forms and demographic sheets, which were printed out for every participant. A voice recorder
was used to record the interviews with the permission of the participants. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix 5. The general structure of the observations followed the one described in Section 4.5.4 for the lesson observations in Phase 1.

4.7.3. Procedures

In-depth interviews, lesson observations, hand-written field notes, and teaching materials constituted the data set for this phase. Observation of each of the three teachers lasted for the period of just under one month. This included the initial background interview with the teacher, an intensive week of lesson observation, a follow-up week of further observations, and a concluding interview where the teacher had a chance to look through the transcripts of the initial conversation and provide adjustments if they deemed it necessary, and where clarification questions could be asked. In addition to this, the teachers provided examples of their lesson plans and some additional teaching material they used.

Interviews were conducted before observations occurred and then again at the completion of the data collection period. In the initial interview, the teachers were asked to describe their teaching background and beliefs about language teaching. They were also asked to contemplate the influences they experienced in their pre-service and in-service professional preparation and their experiences that shaped their views of teaching, as well as about anything that has occurred throughout their career that contributed to changing the way in which they teach. Next, each teacher was asked to describe their school and students, and the kind of teaching they believe fosters the development of communicative competence.

Lesson observations of 20 English language lessons were conducted over the period of 2 weeks for each teacher (i.e., 20 at each site and 60 in total). Detailed notes were made during each lesson observation. At the end of each school day, a half-page summary was written for every lesson, and relevant activities and interactions were described in detail.
In order to get the most complete picture of the teachers’ classroom practices, these guidelines were followed for the lessons observations (see Table 4.3):

1) at least one or two full days of teaching;
2) at least two consecutive lessons on each of the other days;
3) at least two consecutive lessons with the same group of students during the week;
4) all age groups the teacher taught; and
5) two different groups of the same age and the same lesson topic.

Observing successive lessons and lessons at different points (here in the course of two or three weeks and with various age groups) was done to “minimise the dangers of observer paradox or one-off display lessons not typical of regular teaching” (Carless, 2003, pp. 487-488).

Artefacts provided by the teachers were collected and examined in addition to the interviews and lesson observations. These included copies of teaching materials used or created by the participants. Teachers were also asked to provide examples of their lesson planning. Finally, a few samples of student work, usual classroom handwriting and project work reports were collected to help illustrate key points of the observations.

After the lesson observation period, another interview was conducted and particular examples from the lessons were discussed. In addition to the interviews, the teachers would often share their ideas informally between the lessons, such as during break time, or while packing up after the lessons. These ideas were written down by the researcher in the form of the field notes as soon as possible and the text expanded after the end of the school day.

4.7.4. Analysis

Extensive field notes and lesson descriptions, as well as teaching materials produced by the teachers were used to create a thick description of the three teaching contexts. The goal was to create a narrative that would represent the participants’ voices in full, but at the same time would contain only relevant detail and be coherent and
readable (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). In order to achieve this, the researcher followed a four-step process described by Smyth and McInerney (2013). This included being immersed in data by reading all the notes about each teacher, then re-reading them to discover those issues relevant to the Research Questions of this particular study. This was followed by selecting and synthesizing the quotes, and finally, writing the story of each teacher. These steps helped ensure that the quotes and lesson excerpts were well contextualized and that nothing important was missed, but at the same time the stories of each case study were relevant and easy to follow. As a final step, the practices of each teacher were summarised following the TBLT framework provided in Section 4.7.1 above.

The translation procedures differed for this phase in that the excerpts from the lessons were provided in their original languages (Ukrainian, Russian, or English). This was done to illustrate the extent of the use of the FL and L1 by the teacher and students in each case, and any mistakes in their speech were not corrected for the purposes of authenticity (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). However, the meaning of the L1 phrases has been provided in brackets for the ease of the reader.

4.8. Quality control mechanisms

Quality control mechanisms were used in this qualitative research to ensure that the validity and trustworthiness of the research could be attained, namely dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability (Davis, 1992; Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004). In addition, the researcher’s positioning and potential bias were addressed through the use of reflexive accounts at the stage of data collection and interpretation.

First, in order to ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability (Davis, 1992; Shenton, 2004), the current study employed different mechanisms for triangulation (Long, 2005a). This was possible through the use of multiple sources (i.e., teachers, teacher educators, state and teacher-generated documents, textbooks) and methods (i.e., observation, interviews, document analysis); multiple visits (time triangulation) and locations (location triangulation) (J. D. Brown, 2009). Credibility was also
ensured by the familiarity with the culture of the participants, purposeful sampling of schools and teachers, negative case analysis (i.e., teacher perceptions, lessons and documents that differed significantly from the majority of cases were included in the analysis and the differences were addressed), and member checking (Shenton, 2004).

With respect to member checking, or “testing out” the findings and conclusions with the participants (Davis, 1992, p. 607), eight of the initial eleven teachers, one of the two teacher educators and a policy maker were re-visited during the second field trip. Teachers and the teacher educator were provided with an overview of the findings and tentative conclusions including themes and dot points of the key information. They were encouraged to look through and add anything they thought was missing or comment on anything with which they disagreed. For the case studies, the three participating teachers were also provided an opportunity to look through the transcription of their initial interview and make comments or changes if needed.

In terms of transferability, the boundaries of the study were clearly determined (Shenton, 2004) and the thick description provided detailed information for the reader to decide whether the “working hypotheses” of the study could be transferred to another setting based on the degree of similarity between the two contexts (Davis, 1992, p. 606).

As indicated, to address the researcher’s positioning and potential bias, reflexive practices were used. In order to develop reflexive accounts it is necessary that pre-conceptions, whatever they may be, are made as explicit as possible. This is done by being “self-conscious” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 424) about the role they play in the research process, including data analysis, and the interpretations that are developed. In this way, knowledge is constructed “through the interaction between respondents’ accounts and how we make sense of these accounts” (Mauthner &

---

3 One of the eleven teachers did not work at school anymore and did not have time to meet, another teacher was on a maternity leave, the third teacher could not meet due to a medical condition, and a teacher educator spent a few months in a different city observing student teachers during their school placements.
Doucet, 2003, p. 424). Holliday (2010, p. 11) argues that fieldworkers should learn to “submit” themselves to the data to allow the “unexpected” to crystallise. In this way, the researcher can move from the initial interpretation to a deeper understanding of the researched and better represent the complexity of the field, which increases the general trustworthiness of the study and enhances the thick description. Taking this reflexive approach allowed the researcher in the current study to see that certain aspects such as needs analysis did take place in the current setting although it appeared to be otherwise at first.

Further, the use of reflexivity helps achieve balance between the etic (outsider) and emic (insider) perspectives on the problem, which is especially relevant when the researcher is native to the context of their fieldwork, as was the case in the current study. For critical qualitative research, such issues as “insider/outsiderness,” “reflexivity” and “otherisation” are essential for equipping the researcher with means to “make visible the unexpected for the purpose of revealing deeper complexities that counter established discourses” (Holliday, 2010, p. 11). To achieve this, the researcher attended lessons in Australian schools before commencing her fieldwork in Ukraine. When in the field, she had conversations with the expatriate teachers working in Kyiv, Ukraine. These school visits and discussions, for instance, attracted the researcher’s attention to the students’ movement around the classroom which seemed to be more restricted in Ukraine than in the West, and this aspect was included into a group of factors under the theme of structured environment. However, these initial interpretations were challenged and reinterpreted as more time was spent in the field. During the observations it was noticed that while students were mainly sitting at their desks during the lesson, all participants tried to arrange activities that would allow their students to at least move to and from the blackboard, or copy the movements to a song while sitting or standing at the desks. It became apparent that movement during the lesson actually is important for the local teachers. The difference from the Western classrooms, therefore, was not in the teachers’ beliefs about movement, but in the facilities and time constraints under the structured environment. The new understanding of this feature enabled the researcher to identify an increase in student activity and movement in the lesson as a desirable change in this FLT context.
4.9. Ethical issues

All participants in this study were adults, namely primary and secondary school teachers and teacher educators in Ukraine. School headmasters and all the participants were provided with the Information letters in their first language and their written permission to collect necessary data was obtained through the signing of consent forms. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. After the interviews were conducted, participants were given an opportunity to verify the data obtained and make any necessary clarifications. Permission to use video material for the TBLT presentation was officially provided by the owners of the copyright/intellectual property. It was provided with the annual report to the Ethics Committee in June 2014.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted after the lessons to avoid disruption of the teaching process. Times to conduct non-participant lesson observations were negotiated with the teacher so that they could occur at the most convenient time for her. While working with the participants in the field, the researcher took special effort to situate herself as a learner, not an expert (J. D. Brown, 2009).

Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by not including any identifying information in data collection and representation, as well as by storing all data obtained from teachers in a secure location. The researcher collected, transcribed and coded all the qualitative data herself. Any information that would make it possible to identify the participants or schools was removed and no real names have been used in the presentation of the data.

Prior to research commencement, a low risk ethics clearance was obtained from Human Research Ethics Committee at Curtin University.

---

4 A variety of consent letters and forms were used for the various phases of this research. Samples of those used are provided in Appendix 6 (English version). Note they were slightly adapted according to the context for which they were used and translated into the participants’ L1.
4.10. Chapter summary

Within the interpretive constructivist framework, this study used qualitative methods informed by ethnography in order to answer the Research Questions. Based on the two field trips, a research design included three phases – a study of current policies and practices of FLT in Ukraine, a TBLT presentation and feedback, and case studies of three teachers to further illustrate and contextualize the earlier findings and for the purposes of data triangulation. Relevant ethical issues were considered and quality control mechanisms applied.
Chapter 5: FLT curriculum and pedagogy in Ukraine

5.1. Overview

This chapter addresses the first Research Question, presenting a description of the current FLT curriculum in post-Soviet Ukraine. It focuses on the macro context (see Figure 4.1. in the Method Chapter) as reflected in FLT policies, the centrally designed curriculum, those resources and methodologies that are promoted, beliefs about teaching and learning, and state examinations. The constructs that are presented here are based on the findings from Phase 1 of this study, which were further verified during the second field visit. The chapter consists of two distinct, but complementary parts – 1) the setting for, and 2) the conceptualization of FLT in the Ukrainian school curriculum. In the first section (5.2) – the setting – the significance and place of FLT in the school curriculum are explained. The second section (5.3) describes five key concepts that characterise the FLT curriculum and the way it is represented within the Ukrainian policies and perceived by practitioners.

It is important to note that the purpose of the present chapter is not to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum, which is beyond the scope of the current study, but rather, it includes a description of the perceptions of the local stakeholders about the advantages and disadvantages of their educational system. This has been done because ecological innovation needs to address problems and deficiencies of the local context as understood by the locals (Vesisenaho & Dillon, 2013).

In this thesis, the terms “curriculum” and “syllabus” are not synonymous. Instead, curriculum is understood as a combination of all subject areas that are studied at school, and incorporates the guidelines for the content and outcomes for each of these subjects, their distribution across the years of study, and the allocation of hours to be spent in teaching each one. In contrast, for the purposes of the current study, the term syllabus denotes subject-specific information, in which detailed guidelines for the content and outcomes of a subject area are provided. The curriculum for Ukrainian schools is outlined in the State Standards and the Typical Teaching Plans, whereas the syllabus is provided in the Educational Programs.
5.2. Setting

The following section begins with the rationale for teaching FLs in Ukraine as described in the FLT policies. These include general educational documents such as State Program “Education (Ukraine of the 21st century)” (Cabinet of Ministers, 1993), official recommendations and letters by the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) related to FLT, State Standards for Education, and Educational Programs for FLs. Next, the positioning of FLT in relation to other subjects across the different years of schooling is explored. Finally, the guidelines for the content and outcomes provided in these policies are described, and the system of state examinations is explained.

5.2.1. Rationale for FLT

Within the curriculum for Ukrainian schools, the significance of FLT is explained. In addition, the theoretical underpinning of its representation for Ukrainian schools is provided. This includes a description of the didactic and methodological principles and approaches that guide what is taught and how this should be done. Finally, the curriculum provides an account of the competences and psycho-physiological characteristics of the students who are engaged in FL learning.

According to the information in the curriculum, the significance of FLT in Ukrainian schools relates to the social, cultural, and economic benefits at both personal and national levels. Firstly, FLT is promoted because it provides numerous possibilities for the intellectual and moral development of students. Secondly, it is stated that FL acquisition is important for the self-realisation and socialisation of a student (MOES, 2012a; MOES, 2013b). FL skills are seen as essential for survival in a globalized and increasingly multicultural and multilingual world, particularly in the period of growing international relations and increasing use of electronic media (MOES, 2012b). Further, these skills are described as essential for the “social, economic and cultural tendencies of the development of modern society” (MOES, 2013a, p. 1). They are claimed to strengthen a general language focus in education and society, which in turn is expected to foster the revival of the national language and provide an
opportunity for ethnic minorities to learn and promote their languages (MOES, 2011a).

The State Standards set the requirement that all subjects in the Ukrainian school curriculum need to be personality-oriented, competence-, and action-based. Adopting a personality-oriented approach means targeting the “development of students’ academic, socio-cultural, socio-psychological and other skills” (MOES, 2011a, p. 3), or more generally speaking, “the development of a student’s personality” through cooperation with the teacher (MOES, 2011a, p. 3). A competence-based approach requires facilitating the development of general learning and area-specific competences (learned abilities that include knowledge, experience, values and attitudes demonstrated in practice), whereas an action-based approach means finding ways of practical implementation of knowledge and skills in the respective disciplines. The development of communicative competence is seen as a main goal of FLT in Ukrainian schools, and incorporates “language competence” (encompassing vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, and spelling); “speech competence” (encompassing Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing); “sociocultural” and “sociolinguistic” competences; “discoursive competence”; and “strategic competence” (MOES, 2010a, p. 27).

These competences are further specified through a set of the pedagogic principles of FLT in Ukraine as outlined in the Educational Program for Primary School (MOES, 2012b). These principles maintain that FLT should be: communicative; personality-oriented; action-based; and organized by themes. In particular, FLT teachers are encouraged to consider the L1 learning experience of their learners, use comprehensible and relevant learning material, and apply an individual approach in their teaching. Further, this document suggests that FLT lessons should ensure a socio-cultural orientation, combine the development of the four macro skills, consider the psychological mechanisms that involve “maximum analysers to achieve

5 Originally in English.
the satisfactory level of skills development” (pp. 3-4), and foster academic and personal development of students (pp. 6-7).

Finally, according to the information outlined in the Educational Programs, the age-related psychological and physiological characteristics should be considered in school-based FLT. For instance, embedded within the curriculum appears to be a belief that learning a FL from year one is beneficial for students. It is specifically indicated that an early start fosters the development of positive motivation for language learning and prepares students for further learning (MOES, 2012a). The curriculum reflects a view that commencing FL learning from year one is crucial for the successful development of phonetic and intonation skills and an understanding of letter-sound relationships, which is attributed to the unique psycho-physiological characteristics of young children.

Further, the Educational Program for Primary School (MOES, 2012b) provides specific instructions for primary-aged students. The characteristics that need to be considered with regard to these younger learners include their high emotionality, inattention, impulsivity, a tendency to copy others, and their lack of learning strategies. To that end, it is suggested that teachers use age-appropriate methods and games in their teaching to facilitate students’ cognitive activity, images to help them memorise, authentic FL phrases that they can copy, visual aids to help their attentiveness, and that grammar structures should be presented as lexical items (i.e., when grammar rules are too complex for children to understand, they should be taught grammar structures as vocabulary items).

The Educational Program for Secondary School (MOES, 2013b) also shows a considerable increase in the amount of material to be studied. It also reflects a push for more independent learning; incorporates a larger variety of learning activities; has a stronger focus on multicultural aspects of communication; and is based on the active use of ‘speech situations’ that imitate real-life conditions. With these older students, teachers are expected to use authentic teaching materials and integrate content from other subjects into FLT. They are also encouraged to use literature, TV and radio programs that involve real-life language at an appropriate level of complexity.
5.2.2. The place of FLT in the curriculum

In the Ukrainian school curriculum, FL learning is located within the Languages and Literatures learning area. Out of the seven main learning areas of the compulsory curriculum, ‘Languages and Literature’ is allocated the most number of hours at all levels of schooling. In the policies, FLT is identified as one of the core subjects that students study at school. Along with Ukrainian language, history, literature, mathematics, and nature studies, it is included in the top priorities for educational reform in the country (Cabinet of Ministers, 1993).

Table 5.1 below shows the distribution of hours for different curriculum subjects in a school week as outlined in Typical Teaching Plans (MOES, 2010b, 2011d, 2012c). Numbers provided with a slash illustrate the difference in the distribution of hours in the general comprehensive schools and schools that specialise in FL studies, on the left and on the right respectively. The table includes data from three different school years: one primary and two secondary, and is provided to illustrate the range across the curriculum. Year two has been selected as it is when the basic FLT course begins after the preparatory course in year one. Years five and nine are the first and the last years of basic secondary school respectively. The information for upper secondary school is not provided as many variations exist across the range of classes.
Table 5.1. **FLs among other subjects in the school curriculum (hours per week)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian language</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign language</strong></td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>2/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health basics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian literature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World literature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second foreign language</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-2/</td>
<td>-2/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Ukraine</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World history</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.5/29.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>32/36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of hours dedicated to FLT increases in all schools from year one to year eleven. In year one, general comprehensive schools offer an “introductory” hour of
FLT a week, compared to three hours in the same year of schooling in specialised schools. For the rest of the primary years general schools offer two hours of FLT, then the number fluctuates between two and three hours throughout secondary school with three hours a week being the standard in upper secondary. Specialised schools stay at three hours in the first three years, then increases in time to four hours in year four and five hours in years five to eleven (MOES, 2010b, 2011d, 2012c). Overall, specialised schools offer almost twice as many hours of FL instruction as other schools. In addition, there has recently been a push to make a second FL compulsory for Ukrainian students. As a result, schools that specialise in FLs offer instruction in two FLs for every student at basic and upper secondary levels, while for other schools it is optional and depends on the availability of teachers (MOES, 2014b).

5.2.3. Syllabus and content guidelines

The Educational Program for each school level outlines the content and expected outcomes for FLT in Ukraine. An examination of this framework shows that it is a synthetic (rather than analytic) and product-oriented syllabus (Nunan, 1988). It includes themes, functions and notions, and three main competences – 1) linguistic (grammar, vocabulary, phonetics), 2) socio-cultural, and 3) general learning. Hence, this is a mixed, or a multi-strand syllabus (Ur, 1996). It is compiled in a “concentric way” with the same themes revisited from year to year, to ensure systematic recycling of the learned material (MOES, 2012b, p. 7).

Within the syllabus, the themes are grouped according to the spheres of communication, for instance Personal (I, my family and friends; Leisure; Nature), Public (Holidays and Traditions), and Education (School). This is followed by a list of functions, such as to greet, to part, to introduce someone, with examples of the functions in the form of the formulaic language, such as Hello! I am... My name is... It is a... The linguistic competence consists of lexical, grammatical, and phonetical components. Again, these are specified within particular thematic constructs, such as vocabulary families (e.g., shopping, furniture, travelling, transport), grammar structures (e.g., Present Continuous, indefinite articles, ordinal numerals), and phonetics (word stress, intonation, clear pronunciation). Competencies are also
provided describing what should be learned. For instance, within the socio-cultural competence, it is indicated that students should learn to choose and use greetings relevant to the situation, whereas within the area of general learning competence they are required to follow the presented information and to cooperate in a pair/group.

This type of framework is provided for the four main languages taught in Ukraine: English, German, Spanish, and French. In the document, each appears on a separate page, although the outcomes are the same for the four languages included in the Educational Program document. The framework for each school year is followed by a description of the intended learning outcomes which, in turn, are classified into four groups: those for listening, reading, writing, and speaking (monologic and dialogic). For instance, an expected outcome for monologic speech for a third year student in a specialised school is to be able to:

- make short reports about every day and past actions and events; describe his/her classroom, room, games and leisure, the weather, a family, a holiday, people, and animals; express their attitude towards things and phenomena.
- The length of the statement should be seven-eight sentences. (MOES, 2012b, p. 80)

By the end of year eight a student in a general school should develop the following reading skill:

- to read (with full understanding) texts based on familiar material; to find necessary information in the texts of various types (the meaning of unknown words is revealed with the help of guess, a picture, resemblance with L1, explanations in a commentary. Text length is within 700 printed characters. (MOES, 2013b, p. 51)

The ‘framework-outcomes’ pattern is repeated for every year of schooling from year one to eleven.

In addition to this framework, the *Educational Program for Primary School* (MOES, 2012b) outlines a set of principles that are expected to guide the content of each individual lesson. These include: communicative value and sufficiency, authenticity, typicality, accordance with the norms of communication, frequency of use, and
minimisation. In other words, the teaching approach that is encouraged is one that aims to foster and to develop students’ speaking skills within a given theme; contains authentic vocabulary, phonetics and grammar; and includes authentic socio-cultural aids (e.g., mime, gestures, and illustrations). It is also designed to correspond with the norms of communication in countries where the target language is spoken and represent the language frequently used there. Overall, it should prepare students for successful communication reflecting real-life language use, and the integration of knowledge and skills (within age-specific limits) that students acquire when learning other subjects. Finally, it should encourage independent work and self-reflection.

5.2.4. State examinations

In Ukraine, the External Independent Testing system is used “as part of the final examination and admission to further studies” (MOES, 2010a, p. 7). While these tests include an English language test, this is compulsory only for the students graduating from specialised schools, being optional for those from other schools.

Every test consists of three parts. The first part includes four texts with comprehension activities, such as multiple choice questions and matching texts to their purpose or audience (e.g., read the text and choose correct answers for the questions, read the text and choose which of the sentences best fits each space); the second part requires students to complete cloze activities (e.g., choose the correct verb form or vocabulary item for each space in the given text); and the third part is a writing activity where students are instructed to write a letter as a response to a given situation (e.g., a radio program or a letter from a friend) (Martyniuk, Nabokova, & Sverdlova, 2015). The instruction for the writing activity also provides brief dot points of what type of information should be covered in a letter (e.g., “Write a letter in which you say what you are going to do during the winter holidays, what you like about winter holidays most of all and why, what your usual winter indoor and outdoor pastimes are” (Martyniuk et al., 2015, p. 27). Therefore, the design of these compulsory tests includes assessment of not only vocabulary and grammar knowledge, but also of the students’ ability to problem-solve and to express their opinion in a written form. As students are not provided with the specific language to
use in their letters, it may be assumed that this activity is essentially meaning-focused. At present, the tests assess only two of the macro skills – Reading and Writing, and according to the policy maker consulted in Phase 1 of this study, Listening and Speaking are not assessed due to the limited resources, but these are planned to be added in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

Only two participants of this study suggested a backwash effect of this test – that is, lessons dominated by a focus on the test preparation (Harmer, 2007). These teachers said that there is not much time for communicative activities as their students need to be drilled in preparation for the test. The inclusion of Listening and Speaking in the future may change the test to be more supportive of the communicative classroom practices for all ages.

Therefore, it appears that FLT in Ukraine is seen as a discipline area that makes education relevant to the needs of students and helps them become successful in modern society and, as such, it is a priority area for that country’s educational reform. With the increasing hours allotted to this subject and a number of requirements for its content, the expectations of its deliverables are high. Looking at the way FLT curriculum is conceptualized and the way it is understood by the practitioners provides an insight into the issues to be considered when planning a successful innovation.

5.3. Conceptualization of FLT in the Ukrainian curriculum

This section examines the main constructs or themes that characterise the FLT curriculum as it currently exists in Ukraine. Content analysis (as described in Section 4.5.5) revealed four main themes including transformation and flexibility of the curriculum, its multiple goals, and a specific focus on culture. The last theme, namely “Forms and meaning combined in a weak CLT” is based on the Western concepts of “form,” “meaning,” and “forms” that are not used in the local context but are utilized in this thesis to locate this discussion within the international professional
discourse. At the same time, the absence of these concepts in the local context constitutes one of the major findings of this phase.

5.3.1. Transformation

The discourse of transformation happening within Ukrainian FLT can be clearly identified through the wording of the policies. For example, the educational documents abound with phrases such as “transformation processes,” “renewed (content),” “development (of the modern school education),” “changes (in strategic direction),” “active reorientation,” “rethinking (of theoretical approaches to the choice of effective teaching tools)” (MOES, 2012b, p. 3); “the need… for quick adaptation,” “[the need for] new approaches” (MOES, 2012a, p. 1). This suggests that at the level of policies, the need for change in Ukrainian FLT has been acknowledged.

Further, the concept of transformation in the FLT curriculum for Ukrainian schools reflects wider social processes of change that are occurring both in Ukraine and worldwide. It is explicitly stated that “the content of FLT in secondary school depends on the order of society and is determined by the current period of its historical development” (MOES, 2013b, p. 6). This is also evident in the use of phrases such as “new realities [that] require changes” (MOES, 2012b, p. 3), “ever changing world,” and “new educational realities” (MOES, 2012a, p. 1).

In particular, the FLT curriculum seems to reflect the processes of “globalization” and “intensification of international connections in various spheres of life” (MOES, 2012b, p. 3). Further, the abstract notion of globalization is specified through the focus on Europe and European standards. For instance, it is stated that FLT should assist in the formation of a “philosophy of a modern European [citizen]” (MOES, 2012a, p. 1). The Country Report: Ukraine document developed for the Council of Europe (MOES, 2010a, p. 48) explains this direction in the following way.⁶

---

⁶ Originally in English.
Since 1991 when Ukraine had become an independent country, it proclaimed its orientation to human values which coincide with those of Europe. The Ukraine’s intention to acquire all the features of a European country [is] reflected in many documents which were signed with other European states…. The main objective of cooperation with the Council of Europe is to create a new generation of young people who, sharing the values of a democratic society, respect the culture, religion and the world-view of other peoples, fluently speaks several European languages, which provides a basis for dynamic development and self-fulfilment in the educational and professional respect within the united Europe.

Another example of Europeanization of FLT in Ukraine is the introduction of the European Language Portfolio. This tool for students’ self-evaluation has been translated and adjusted for Ukrainian schools (MOES, 2012a). Its use is encouraged in schools with the aim to develop students’ self-assessment skills and to facilitate integration of the European standards of assessment (MOES, 2012b, p. 7). Europeanization of the Ukrainian curriculum is also evident in the use of the Western-published textbooks recommended by the MOES, such as those by Longman, Cambridge, and Pearson (MOES, 2015b).

However, this tendency towards Europeanization does not mean that the European approach to FLT is completely embraced. While the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) has been adopted as a base for the Ukrainian syllabus, not all of it has been integrated into the local FLT. According to the policy maker who was interviewed in this study, the CEFR is mainly used to maintain a degree of conformity in proficiency levels in order to facilitate international cooperation. She said:7 “Our syllabuses … are based on the European Framework …and we speak the same language, meaning when we say that students of a comprehensive school have to reach B1 level … we know what we are

7 English translations are provided here and elsewhere for the ease of the reader. For the description of the translation procedure see the Methodology Chapter, and for the examples of the original quotes and their translation see Appendix 2.
speaking about.” At the same time, a recommendation to use language tasks to achieve FLT goals (see Chapter 7 of the CEFR) has not been incorporated in Ukraine.

At the same time, the tendency towards globalization is balanced against the high esteem with which local FLT expertise is held, both from the past and the present. In particular, the contribution of local academics to the development of FLT is highly regarded among many teachers. For instance, one participant mentioned Georgy Verba, a Ukrainian academic and author of the English language grammar textbooks. This teacher recalled an event when a delegation of American colleagues was visiting her school and, as the teacher explained, were so impressed by the textbook that they purchased a number of them to take back to their US schools. A teacher educator mentioned in the interview how, to her knowledge, the first scholar to develop the communicative approach to language teaching was actually Yefim Passov, a Soviet academic. A few of the teachers indicated that they still use some of the textbooks developed earlier by Soviet and Ukrainian professionals, and shared how they find these materials effective for teaching reading and grammar.

Hence, while the data reveal a tendency towards change and learning from the outside (such as adopting some European standards, policy guidelines, and materials for FLT), the practitioners also described how they utilized aspects from their own FLT heritage. This combination of change and tradition is in line with the findings of other post-communist scholars (Anweiler, 1992; Bain, 2010) and suggests that the process of transformation and educational change should not be entirely focused on innovation, but also on local tradition. The following subsections further illustrate this in the context of Ukrainian FLT.

5.3.2. Flexibility: Weakened centralization

The concept of flexibility within the current context encapsulates the range of options that allow stakeholders in the educational system to exercise choice, to make appropriate adjustments, and to vary content and teaching approaches. According to the State Standard for Secondary School (MOES, 2011a, p. 4), “content of education
is the same for all students in basic secondary school.” Despite this, different options do exist at several levels within Ukrainian curriculum.

Firstly, there are different versions of the FLT syllabus that schools use in Ukraine. The two main syllabuses that are used differentiate between general comprehensive schools and schools that specialise in FLs. The choice between these school types with a possibility for an in-depth study of a FL in the latter is believed to facilitate the development of gifted children (MOES, 2010a). There also exist various syllabus types for the upper secondary school, specifically a FL can be taught as a subject for professional training in so-called “streamed classes.” In this way, different schools and syllabuses are designed to cater for the different abilities of students.

Flexibility is also exercised in Ukrainian schools by way of the optional parts of the curriculum. In particular, optional hours are provided to assist the “specificities of the region and students’ individual educational needs” (MOES, 2011a, p. 5), as well as “parents’ or carers’ requests” (MOES, 2011b, p. 3). There are several ways these hours can be utilized. They can be allocated either as additional time for compulsory and/or optional subjects, or for group and individual lessons, or for after-lesson consultations (MOES, 2011a, pp. 18-19). Having students “choose elective courses according to their capabilities” is believed to facilitate the fulfilment of personality-oriented, competence-based, and action-based approaches to FLT (MOES, 2011a, p. 4). Vocation-oriented (streamed) classes in the upper secondary level are granted the highest level of flexibility with more opportunities for choice, especially in terms of the ratio of the compulsory and optional parts of the curriculum.

Despite the advantages of such flexibility, it does seem that non-specialised schools suffer from an inadequate allocation of teaching hours for FL. As one of the teachers in this study explained, despite having considerably fewer hours of FLT a week than schools with intensive language instruction (see Section 5.2.2 in this Chapter), their students are expected to participate in the same Olympiads – contests in academic subjects regularly organized among schools locally and nationally. Another teacher mentioned that it is very hard to deliver an appropriate FL program in only two hours a week in secondary school, noting that the promised increase to three hours for some age groups has not yet happened. Likewise, a primary school teacher suggested
that the newly introduced one hour a week for year ones in general schools is too little to make a difference. Even the policy maker agreed stating that “no big changes [have] happened in year one.” A teacher educator explained: “What can you teach in that amount of time? To familiarise students, to trigger interest… unfortunately, one hour a week is not enough even for that … we need more hours a week and fewer students in the classroom.” Another teacher educator indicated that providing more hours for this subject is one of the main changes she would like to see in schools.

Therefore, while the curriculum in Ukraine is still developed and prescribed centrally, more freedom exists now in the FLT in public school sector to cater for students with various abilities and goals. At the same time, this flexibility varies across the educational sector, with less choice and timing provided for FLT in general schools. Given that time pressure is an important factor of the macro context that influences change processes (Van Avermaet et al., 2006), these features of the Ukrainian FLT should be accounted for in the process of innovation planning.

5.3.3. Multiple goals

Another specific feature of the FLT in Ukrainian schools is that, along with the attainment of certain levels of language proficiency, it is expected that students will achieve a range of goals.

First, it is suggested that a competence in FL should be developed through practice in all four macro skill areas; through learning correct pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar; and through learning about the countries of the target language (MOES, 2011a, 2011b). The requirement to develop strategic competence incorporates self-organisation, the use of learning strategies, the ability to respond to circumstances/events/questions in an appropriate way, to analyse one’s own learning experience, and to find ways of its improvement (MOES, 2011a, p. 25).

Other aims of FLT in Ukraine include “familiarisation [of students] with the language system and development of basic lexical, grammar, stylistic, orthoepy, and orthographic skills”, and to “deepen understanding of language as a social phenomenon” (MOES, 2011a, p. 8-9). These descriptors suggest that FLT in
Ukrainian schools is expected to provide not only language skills, but also basic knowledge of linguistics. Indeed some lesson plans and observed lessons included detailed instructions about the parts of speech and sentence structure (e.g., types of the pronouns, noun phrases, and adverbial modifiers), as well as stylistic guidance during Business English lessons in the upper secondary classes.

In addition to this, according to the theoretical principles and requirements that underpin the content of the FLT policies in Ukraine, education has to ensure “unity of academic and character education based on humanism, democracy, civic awareness, mutual respect between nations and peoples” (MOES, 2011b, p. 1). FL lessons are required to promote students’ interest in FLs and cultures, motivate them, develop their “positive attitude to the subject”, foster their understanding about other people and countries, and to enable learners to make friends with those from other cultures (MOES, 2012b, p. 4). Further, the analysis of the teacher-produced lesson plans for primary school reveals that another key aim is to develop a love for FL learning. For instance, in the year one and two lesson plans collected from the participants in this study one of the aims is: “to cultivate love in the foreign language, to develop interest in the foreign culture.” This also seems to be the aim of secondary-school FLT, as one teacher said: “We have to encourage [students], help them get better, achieve higher.” Two other practitioners indicated that their goal is “not to discourage children from learning languages.”

Included in the policies are also expectations that the teaching materials used in FL lessons reflect the multiple goals of the curriculum. In particular, these materials have to

… not only ensure acquisition of knowledge and skills in the subject, but also develop students’ attention, memory, thinking, develop ability to make conclusions and generalisations, [they also] widen the worldview, upgrade the level of personal culture, foster development of personal qualities, including benevolence, empathy, collective mutual help, and others. (MOES, 2013a, p. 2)

Given this range of expectations for FLT in school, it is hardly surprising that all FL lessons in Ukraine appear to have a combination of multiple objectives. In the
Methodological Recommendations for FLT (MOES, 2013a, p. 2), for instance, it is stated that the process of FLT “is subject to the achievement of practical, educational, character education and development objectives in their unity.” Hence, the objective of each FLT lesson in Ukraine is four-fold: “communicative, educational, [that of] character education, and general development” (MOES, 2012b, p. 4).

For example, in a year six teacher-produced lesson plan, the lesson theme is “The world is in danger” and it has the following aims:

- **practical**: to develop skills to retell in short what was heard or read, to develop listening and text comprehension skills;
- **educational**: to deepen students’ knowledge about the condition of the environment;
- **developmental**: to continue developing critical thinking, skills of pair and group work;
- **character education**: to cultivate respect to the planet, to teach love for the Homeland.

In a year three lesson plan, the lesson has the theme “Family. Professions” and its aims are as follows:

- **practical**: to familiarize students with new words, to improve monologic and dialogic speaking skills, teach to tell about parents’ professions and how to retell the text, to practise listening, to develop writing skills;
- **educational**: to deepen students’ knowledge about different professions;
- **developmental**: to develop phonemic and intonation listening skills, to develop skills of logical expression of thoughts;
- **character education**: to cultivate respect for the workers of different professions, to habituate students to the intense intellectual work in the lesson.

This approach to FLT appears to be quite comprehensive, and may look somewhat ambitious to an outsider. For the local teachers, however, it is a desirable outcome. A secondary school teacher described her lessons as aiming to help students find a good job, build friendships, communicate successfully, and be able to read literature in the
original language. Another secondary teacher elaborated on the reasons behind this comprehensiveness: “it is to teach a child to learn, that she does not just learn the language as a science, but is able to learn… to become something more, better and smarter than before… [learning] English makes one a better person…” Similarly, another teacher educator emphasised in the interview that:

a FL lesson has to provide not only skills for practical use of language, but to ensure character education of the child in all spheres by means of FL, it has to educate. We also give basic information about the countries of the language, and [develop] philological worldview, you cannot leave it out.

Therefore, it is clear that if an innovation is introduced in this context, there is a need to address these various goals for successful implementation to be achieved.

5.3.4. Focus on culture

A cultural component of FLT in Ukraine reflects the processes of globalization, shaping a multicultural society, and nation building. In particular, the focus on culture in the Ukrainian FLT includes learning about the culture of the target language, the local Ukrainian culture, and global cultures and values.

The culture of the language

First of all, the Ukrainian policies require a FL to be taught alongside the culture of its native speakers. “Mutually connected acquisition of language and culture” is in line with the inter-cultural paradigm of FLT in Ukraine (MOES, 2012b, p. 5). This paradigm is realised through the socio-cultural component of the FLT syllabus which includes information regarding the most typical specificities of culture, customs, traditions, celebrations, famous people of literature, art and science, socio-political realities and state symbols, realities of the everyday routine, cultural memorials, museums, theatres of the country of the language. (MOES, 2011a, p. 5)
Moreover, learning the culture of the language includes learning to follow the etiquette of the respective country, to be tolerant of its values and traditions, to develop understanding of the worldview underpinning the language and of the lifestyle of native speakers, and to follow behavioural patterns they use during communication (MOES, 2011a). The teacher educator explained it this way: “Language has to be studied together with the culture… through the cultural phenomena… therefore, [we developed] a lingua-socio-cultural approach, where both social and cultural components are realised through the language.”

At the same time, the teacher educators who participated in the study claimed that current efforts are not enough to create a “FL atmosphere.” For instance, one teacher educator said: “One of the drawbacks of our education in schools and at the university level is that the culture of the target language is not taught in the intended way. Some cultural aspects are considered, but this is not enough.” She suggested teachers should provide their students with more input about various holidays celebrated in other countries and discuss differences in the way people do things. She provided an example from her own experience where she observed a school day in one of the UK schools which appeared to be very different from that in Ukraine, describing how in the UK such things as singing at the morning assembly and having an hour-long lunch are usual, while students in Ukraine have only 20 minutes for their midday meal. She suggested that discussing and comparing such aspects in the lesson help create a more holistic impression of the target culture. The desire to create such environment was echoed during the interview with another teacher educator who explained it this way:

    Now there are all possible technological appliances, anything you want, multimedia boards, computers, plasmas, there is a lot of technology [in schools], but what is lacking is creation of the ‘spirit of the FL.’ This is very important and desirable… The teacher has to be polite during the lesson as a representative of the respective culture would be. Instead, it feels artificial, far-fetched.

Even classroom facilities are expected to promote such an atmosphere. The Head of the FLT Department in one of the schools suggested that a good FL classroom
should differ from other classrooms. She described it in the following way: “when a child enters it, they should be able to understand that … it is not a Maths classroom, but this is where they study English, or German, or French… so that children feel themselves in the atmosphere we want them to be tuned in to.”

_Ukrainian culture_

Along with the culture of the language being taught, FLT in Ukrainian schools also requires the local Ukrainian culture to be promoted. All learning areas in the school curriculum are connected by the “component of Ukrainian studies”, which aims to promote acquisition of knowledge about Ukraine (MOES, 2011a, p. 4). Within the curriculum documents it is stated that FLT should help students understand their culture and “its role in spiritual and moral development of humanity” (MOES, 2012b, p. 8).

In the latest _Methodological Recommendations for FLT_ (MOES, 2015a), a whole section is dedicated to the “National Patriotic Education within FLT” (p. 3). This section introduces the concept of patriotic education which includes citizenship education and the development of students’ moral values and civic position. In FLT lessons in particular this is expected to be done through discussions about students’ ethnicity, families, hometown, and the country. This should be further facilitated through the development of the ability to share information about their country, culture and traditions with their peers around the world by means of a FL. These findings are reflective of Holliday’s (2010) claims that in non-Western settings FLT can be used as a means of citizenship education.

This is particularly the case for the FLT syllabus in secondary schools which includes themes such as “Home city/village,” “National holidays and traditions of Ukraine,” “Travelling (around Ukraine),” and “Famous people (of Ukraine).” Following the syllabus, local textbooks include pictures of and texts about Ukraine. For instance, the locally authored course book for year five students _Dive into English_ (Burenko & Mykhailyk, 2005) has a whole section (25 pages) dedicated to the topic “Kyiv” (the capital of Ukraine). One of the lessons within this topic is
called “Eurovision” featuring Ukraine’s participation in this event and a description of the country’s hosting of it in 2004. One teacher educator explained that, in her opinion, an ideal textbook should “give the shade of … our native culture, our reality of life [as] Ukrainian people.”

Teachers and students also use additional resources and take additional measures to cater for the cultural component of FLT. One teacher said: “We compare traditions, what is out there and what we have here. For instance, we had a topic ‘On the road’ with year eleven students. We spoke about what it is like in Great Britain and in Ukraine, how one gets a driver’s license and so on. ” Another teacher said: “We make sure we bring Ukraine in. In year three and four… when we studied about Incas, Bedouins, Quechua, American pioneers, … I also added information about Ukrainian Cossacks (Ukr. 8 kozaky) to speak about their traditions and legacy … and my lesson was published in one of the local journals for language teachers.” This teacher and her colleagues also showed the researcher a small Reader with texts about Ukraine they use in their lessons. This Reader was prepared and illustrated by year five students for an international competition held by Macmillan Publishers where it came first and was published to be used with English language learners around the world.

Global cultures and values

During FL lessons Ukrainian students are expected to develop general human values such as respect and tolerance. Specifically, the State Standard for Secondary School (MOES, 2011a) requires that students should be taught to respect languages and cultures other than their own. This is exemplified in the Ukrainian FLT policies which promote the idea that a modern person is a part of the “multi- and poli-linguo-ethno-cultural world community” (MOES, 2012b, p. 5). As a consequence, students are expected to develop a desire and skills to participate in this multicultural communication. The syllabus also indicates that FL lessons should develop

8 The equivalent in Ukrainian.
awareness of the similarities and differences between students’ culture and other cultures, which is conceptualized as “the dialogue of cultures” (MOES, 2012b, p. 5).

According to the *Educational Program for Primary School* (MOES, 2012b, pp. 1, 7), along with communicative, strategic and personality-oriented approaches, *culurolohichna linia* (Ukr. for the cultural component) is central to FLT in schools in Ukraine. In the *State Standard for Secondary School* (MOES, 2011a), this *culurolohichna linia* is defined within the “Literature” component, and includes such characteristics of teaching as

Accustoming students with the fundamental values of World Art, interpreting literature works, phenomena and facts in the wider cultural context, revealing connections between literature and philosophy, mythology, folklore, customs, beliefs, and cultural traditions of different peoples and nationalities, widening of the students’ general erudition, cultural upbringing, teaching respect to national and world traditions, tolerance towards representatives of different cultures, religions, races and nationalities. (p. 7)

Along with the study of prose, FLT policies in Ukraine encourage the use of songs and poems during FL lessons (MOES, 2012a). For instance, it is suggested that year two students should be exposed to short jazz compositions, poems and nursery rhymes that are believed to facilitate the communicative mode of the lessons and cultural immersion.

In line with these policies, one primary school teacher described how she studies folk tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Jack and the Beanstalk* with her students emphasizing that these are representative of non-Ukrainian children’s literature. This teacher explained that by taking this approach, she believes she brings a piece of the foreign culture into her classroom. Short rhymes, poems, proverbs, and pop-culture (mainly songs) were often employed in the observed lessons. Some examples of this included use of the tongue twister “She sells seashells at the seashore”, the poem “Why do you cry Willy?” and the nursery rhyme “Mary had a little lamb.” The lessons also included the singing of popular songs with related activities such as ordering the verses or filling in the gaps. This supports Kazemek’s (1993) findings that reading and analysis of literary texts representing both Ukrainian literature and
world literature is one of the key features of the language education in Ukraine. As such, it can be a valuable aspect in the contextualization of educational change in these schools.

Overall, FLT in Ukrainian schools is seen as having a key role in fostering the development of “personal traits of being a citizen of Ukraine who is aware that they also belong to the world community” (MOES, 2011a, p. 8). This is done in three ways. First, attempts are made to expose students to the culture of the countries of the target language by introducing cultural elements into the lesson and trying to create the holistic impression of the respective foreign (e.g., British or French) culture. Second, local FLT incorporates citizenship education into the content of the lesson by promoting local culture. More generally, then, it emphasizes and encourages discussions about cultural values. These three components need to be taken into account in the process of adaptation of the curriculum, teaching approaches and resources related to innovations for this FLT context.

5.3.5. Forms and meaning combined in a weak CLT

In theoretical and empirical work in the field of SLA and FL acquisition and instruction, the terms “form” and “meaning” are crucial for explaining the difference between various language teaching approaches, and particularly for understanding TBLT (Long, 2015; Skehan, 1998). While the examples of both form and meaning were present in the data collected from the observed lessons and during the interviews with practitioners, the terms were not found to exist, or at least not explicitly discussed in the Ukrainian education policies for teachers. They were also not mentioned by the practitioners during the fieldwork. For this reason, differentiation between these two terms in most cases remains ambiguous. There is also no distinction made between what is called “focus on forms” and “focus on form” in the current literature (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long & Norris, 2009) in any of the Ukrainian FLT policies.

Despite not being utilized in the local FLT documents, these terms do appear in Ukrainian governmental reports written for the international community, such as
Country Report: Ukraine (MOES, 2010a). Targeting international audiences, these documents contain such internationally recognised terminology (i.e., meaning and form). Thus, it is only through consulting this report which targets those ‘outside’ that the role of the form and meaning in Ukrainian FLT can be understood:

The [old] syllabus for the schools with 11 years of studies is based on the so-called grammar-translational principle, focusing mostly on the grammatical competency. The form rather than meaning is in the centre of teaching FLs…

New syllabuses for the schools with 11 years of studies are based on the development of the communicative competence. This approach is focused on linguistic functions supporting to develop communicatively oriented language learning. ⁹ (MOES, 2010a, p. 29)

Here, focus on forms (“grammar-translational principle,” “the form rather than meaning”) is contrasted to the development of the communicative competence which is seen as the direction in which FLT is developing. We can assume, therefore, that when the local policies refer to the communicative competence, they imply a focus on meaning or form rather than a focus on forms.

In the State Standard for Secondary School (MOES, 2011a, p. 2), communicative competence is defined as “an ability of the individual to apply language knowledge, ways of face-to-face and distant interaction, group work skills, and various social roles in any particular type of communication.” This competence is expected to enable students to communicate orally and in writing within the spheres and topics specified in the syllabus, and therefore does have meaning as its primary focus, even though the term is implied rather than stated. Language, sociocultural, and sociolinguistic knowledge and skills are believed to “facilitate… the process of students’… socialisation in the new [foreign] society” (MOES, 2013b, p. 3). Communicative competence is to be achieved through age-specific linguistic, speech, and sociocultural experiences with comprehensive development of practical skills (MOES, 2012b).

---

⁹ originally in English
This tendency towards “meaning” also appeared to be embedded into the requirements for teaching materials and assessment. As required in the policies (MOES, 2012a), textbooks that receive approval for use by the MOES need to have a clear and logical structure, and should be based on the four macro skills rather than on language items alone. As indicated in Section 5.2.4 above, it is planned to integrate Listening and Speaking sections into the State Independent Examinations in the next two years. While simply focusing on the four macro skills does not automatically ensure a focus on meaning, it does seem a step in this direction, especially in comparison to those materials based purely on grammar rules and exercises.

It is apparent from the interviews and classroom observations that for many of the participants in this study communicative competence is associated mainly with oral communication. This tendency might be attributed to the desire to shift from the focus on grammar to the practical use of language. As one secondary school teacher said: “Our main goal is to teach communication. Grammar and vocabulary is good, but children have to speak. In my lessons I try to have children speak more.” Another teacher expressed her interpretation of this goal: “When I am teaching English, I want my children to speak… because it is through communication and relationships that many good things happen in our life.” A secondary school teacher said: “I believe the main goal of FLT is to teach children to communicate, to speak, because this is a skill that they will need in life outside school, so that they can express themselves and convey information to the listener, and of course understand the other person.” Yet another secondary school teacher said: “I want my children to speak, to be open to communication.”

Teachers also expressed a desire to help their students become more confident communicators. A year seven teacher shared her concern: “Sometimes I experience difficulties in the development of my students’ speaking skills … so that children are not afraid of making mistakes…” Another teacher expressed a similar idea: “The main goal for me is that students are not afraid of speaking.” A secondary school teacher said: “I prefer activities where children can express themselves…. They can
read a text at home, but if you make them think, and analyze, and speak, this is wonderful.”

**Language knowledge**

Although meaningful communication may be a focus for the FLT policy makers and practitioners in Ukraine, this does not mean that the “forms” have lost significance or are ignored. In fact, despite the stated need to develop meaningful communication, separate language units are used to deliver what can be described as a synthetic language syllabus (see Section 3.2.4 in the Literature Review). Clearly indicated both in the policies and by the teachers is the need for attention to be paid to the development of phonetic, lexical, grammatical, orthographic skills, and language skills in all for macro-skill areas.

It also appears from the data that both policies and the practitioners emphasize the importance of accuracy. For instance, the *State Standard for Primary School* (MOES, 2011b, p. 4) enumerates a number of skills students are expected to develop, namely: “correct pronunciation, …acquisition of the most frequent vocabulary within the indicated themes and spheres of communication, … basic awareness of the grammar categories of the language that is being learned, … correct spelling.” In line with these expectations, one of the teacher educators said: “You have to use … correct English … BBC English … If you respect the language you are learning and teaching, you have to be very precise,” and the other noted: “A competence-based approach means development of the ability to communicate with the use of the foreign language, and the ability is based on knowledge, skills, and desire to communicate.” Good language knowledge is, therefore, seen to be vital for successful communication.

The teachers were also unanimous regarding the importance of explicit and rigorous grammar teaching in their lessons. For example, commenting on her lesson where a grammar structure was presented and drilled, a secondary school teacher said: “We know that speaking is impossible without the knowledge of grammar.” Another teacher said: “for me, the most important at the beginning stage is to teach
vocabulary … and in secondary school it’s grammar… because they will know words … but will have to learn to structure their sentences correctly.”

This rigour was also evident in the desire expressed by the teachers to have vocabulary lists and grammar rules provided and explained in the textbooks for every lesson, so that students know clearly what it is that they have to learn. A year four teacher explained that one of the key functions of the homework is “learning new words by heart…I tell children get ready for the vocabulary dictation we will have next time.” A secondary school teacher complained that often textbooks do not provide grammar rules, so she has to print them out for her students to study them thoroughly in the lesson. These ideas from the teachers were echoed in the teacher educator’s comment: “[Teachers] have to teach the language, all the skills, and you cannot avoid any of them, … you have to teach language that is grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.”

Therefore, from the data it appears that for the practitioners, good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is seen as a necessary pre-requisite for the ability to express meaning, and the way to achieve this level of knowledge is through an explicit focus on and a rigorous study of the language forms during the lesson and at home.

*Contextualizing language forms*

Although the teachers did describe a ‘focus on forms’ (as per Long & Robinson, 1998), it did not seem that in Ukrainian FLT language items are taught completely in isolation. The policy documents indicate the need to avoid unnatural and artificial teaching approaches, but provide a conscious focus on the acquisition of language elements (MOES, 2013a). According to the policies, new language (vocabulary and grammar) should be first introduced in context, and only then should it be used for oral and written communication with the help of relevant activities. In line with the communicative approach, these activities also have to be communicatively oriented. They have to facilitate understanding of both the form and function of a language unit.
Teachers reported on different approaches they utilize to contextualize the new language. For instance, one teacher said she uses situations in the lesson such as “about our environment or about our country” in order to “use these words or grammar structures and make up sentences.” Her colleague specified: “I have learned that you need to do it all [i.e., teach new vocabulary and grammar] in dialogues and situations, otherwise [students] won’t remember it.” It is clear from these descriptions that Ukrainian FL teachers are expected and they make an effort to ensure that the learners encounter new language items in context, which is believed to facilitate a more natural utilization of these items in students’ own speech. This requirement to draw students’ attention to a specific language feature in the process of communication reflects the importance of noticing for successful language acquisition described in the literature (see Long, 2015 for an overview).

However, it is not enough for the new language to be encountered in the context only once. Teachers mentioned their attempts to prompt language recycling though the use of the language items in the texts and other activities further in the lesson. For instance, one practitioner expressed her desire to see continuity in teaching materials where the language structure that is being learned is used in all activities throughout the lesson. Another teacher said: “They keep forgetting, you need to come back to it all the time… This Present Simple, we have to recollect it again and again.” A secondary school teacher described the importance of knowledge reinforcement: “If we learn a grammar structure or vocabulary items… it has to be there in the dialogues, exercises and texts provided in the textbook.” She indicated that, unfortunately, textbooks often provide only one exercise to train students about a particular vocabulary item or grammar structure.

To sum up, while the teachers and the policies suggest an overall focus on communicative competence and a desire to see students engaged in meaningful interaction, these are combined with explicit presentation of new language items. This indicates that FLT in Ukraine aims to follow what is known as a weak version of CLT (Willis, 2004; see Literature Review Section 3.2.2).
5.4. Chapter summary

This chapter provides a thick description of the FLT curriculum in Ukrainian schools. It provides analysis of its theoretical and conceptual underpinning, highlighting the place and importance of FLT as a school subject, as well as the aspects that are seen in need of change and those essential to be incorporated in the contextualizing of innovation.

In particular, five key concepts related to FLT in the Ukrainian curriculum emerged. These concepts reveal the changing character of the FLT curriculum, its movement towards decentralization, although not always balanced, as well as its multiple goals, focus on culture, and attention to language forms and meaning without explicitly addressing and distinguishing between the terms. These characteristics reflect the global and local developments of the macro socio-cultural context in which Ukrainian FLT is taking place. In particular, the curriculum was found to incorporate European standards and opportunities for variety and choice, which are combined with the importance of linguistic knowledge, character education, and culture, especially related to the processes of nation building and globalization, and focus on communicative competence expected to enable students to engage effectively with these processes.

In addition to this, the data revealed terminological and conceptual differences between the local FLT discourse and the international FLT discourse (e.g., local documents and practitioners do not explicitly distinguish between “meaning,” “form,” and “forms”). It is unclear, therefore, how policy makers and teachers can effectively analyse existing practices to make changes necessary to achieve communicative teaching. On the other hand, incorporating both communication and contextualized attention to language form is being attempted, at least to some extent, by some teachers, and reflected in the policy documents.

However, there is a need to examine classroom practices to see whether and how these are applied in practice. Therefore, Chapter 6 provides an examination of the micro context, or the actual practices of FLT in Ukraine.
Chapter 6: FLT practices in Ukrainian schools

6.1. Overview

Addressing the first Research Question, this chapter focuses on the micro context of language teaching and describes current FLT practices in schools in post-Soviet Ukraine. It is based on the findings of Phase 1 of this study and the follow-up interviews with the participants. Specifically, it provides a description of the setting and characteristics of FLT practices in school classrooms in Ukraine. The first section (6.2) focuses on the components of the micro context, and the second section (6.3) explores six key characteristics of the FLT practices in Ukrainian schools that emerged from the data.

As explained in the Background Chapter (Section 2.3.1), various aspects related to FLT practices in Ukrainian schools are centrally regulated, including learning conditions, instructional materials, and ways of assessment, which in practice means that the government and specifically the MOES set the criteria for lesson length, class sizes, and testing procedures. In addition, MOES supervises the writing of textbooks and approves instructional materials for use in the classrooms throughout Ukraine. This chapter outlines both the prescribed FLT conditions and practitioners’ response to these.

6.2. Setting

This section provides a description of six aspects of FLT practices in Ukrainian schools and together these form the setting for the emergent categories described in Section 6.3. These six aspects include: a description of classes, instructional materials, the teaching method promoted in this context, the roles assigned to teachers and students, and ways of assessment (features of the micro context, see Method Chapter, Figure 4.1). In addition, this section also examines the use of L1 during FLT lessons and Ukrainian practitioners’ beliefs about this.
6.2.1. **FLT classes: Time and facilities**

Every lesson in a Ukrainian school is scheduled within a prescribed timeframe. The beginning and the end of every lesson is marked by a bell, and usually there is one lesson per subject, with the possibility of having two lessons for one subject in a row in some specialised schools. This means that if any activity is not finished by the time the bell rings, it will have to be abandoned or disrupted until the next programmed time for that subject, which may not be for a long period of time (a day or even a week). Ukrainian legislation governs the length of lessons, prescribing 35 minutes in year one, 40 minutes in years two to four, and 45 minutes in secondary school (Verkhovna Rada, 2014).

MOES Order No. 128 (MOES, 2002) sets rules for the size of classes in various types of educational establishments, and the rules in general schools and in specialised schools differ. In the former, if a group of students exceeds 27 then the class should be divided into two groups for FL lessons. In the latter, a group of students in a FL classroom should not exceed ten. It is not surprising, therefore, that during the lesson observations, the participants were seen dividing classes into smaller student groups. In fact, only 6 out of 80 observed lessons were held with large class groups (25-30 students), and these were lessons conducted in non-specialised schools. The remaining lessons were conducted with smaller groups of students (six to fifteen).

All but three lessons that were observed in the study took place in classrooms with desks facing the blackboard. There were aisles between the rows of desks with a space between the blackboard and the first line of desks (see Figure 6.1 below). This layout was typical not only for the FLT lessons, but for all academic subjects apart from Physical Education and craft lessons that were held in a gym and a workshop respectively. The three lessons where the desk pattern was different from this are described in the Teacher 2 case study (see Chapter 8 Section 8.3).
As outlined in Chapter 5, the FLT curriculum documents define the main and additional instructional materials that are used by Ukrainian teachers. The key and compulsory teaching tool prescribed by these policies is the textbook. It is referred to as “the main means of instruction.” *The Country Report: Ukraine* (MOES, 2010a) provides a brief description of the procedure to be used when choosing textbooks for FLT. According to this document, schools “select textbooks from the List of Obtainable Textbooks approved by the MOES” (p. 23). The list includes textbooks published by Ukrainian and foreign (e.g., Macmillan, Express Publishing, Longman) publishers. The approved textbooks are often accompanied by a Student Workbook, a Teacher’s Book, and a CD/DVD. Altogether these are often referred to as “methodological sets.” In addition to these resources, there are booklets for testing and readers for use at home.

Not surprisingly, given the directions provided by these policies, all the lessons observed in this study, as well as lesson plans collected, included a certain amount of work based on a selected textbook. Likewise, during classroom observations, the
following instructional phrases were used within lessons with high frequency: “open your books on page…,” “look at the exercise,” “read the text in your books.”

Ukrainian FLT policies also encourage the use of additional materials such as visual resources, technological devices, and resources from the Internet. During the interviews, 9 out of 11 teachers mentioned that they use resources downloaded from the World Wide Web. The teachers described how they look for additional resources on the topic they are teaching. A secondary school teacher admitted she often needs to provide students with additional information on grammar rules. Another secondary school teacher said: “Of course, firstly we use the educational methodological set … which is supplied by the school … and often we also use Internet resources for additional information.” An upper secondary teacher admitted: “It is [from] the Internet of course, I literally dwell there.”

Many of the teachers indicated that they used these resources to make lessons more appealing for their students. For instance, one teacher said: “[We use] textbooks and I also involve Internet resources, looking for some interesting thoughts on the topic.” A secondary school teacher explained: “[I use] a little bit of creativity to do more than just what is there in the textbook… to do something that is more fun, more interesting… to involve students… and then I think the lesson pays off.” Another teacher said: “For year ten students, I am trying to find something about music or books, because they have country studies and literature [at school], and they have many hobbies.”

The use of Internet resources is supported by the FLT policies. Specifically, the policies recommend Ukrainian teachers use technology in their lessons. For example, according to a statement in the *Educational Program for Primary School* (MOES, 2012b, p. 8), “it is advisable to introduce electronic media in school practice.” According to this policy, the use of digital devices in teaching makes it more effective and helps meet various needs of different learners based on their capabilities, personality types, and proficiency levels. All the FL classrooms observed in this study had some technological equipment. They either had a working CD recorder or a computer on which to play CDs. One classroom also had a big screen to play videos from the computer for a larger audience, and most schools had
a special room with a smart board. However, a number of the teachers mentioned that this facility was not easily accessible as it had to be shared among the teachers working in many different subject areas. Personal devices (such as iPads or laptops for students) were not used during the observed lessons, nor were they mentioned in any of the lesson plans.

A number of secondary school teachers described how they tried to use movies in their lessons when facilities allowed them to do so. One teacher shared: “You know I just love different movies about England. The children do not have an opportunity to go there, so I bring my notebook [to school] and show them movies.” However, she then described the difficulties she faces with finding age-appropriate videos for her students to watch: “These movies are a bit difficult [for students] and it is a pity there are no films [suitable] for this age group. There are some cartoons, but no movies.”

A secondary school teacher explained: “Students have got used to computers and TV screens, and they will give more attention to what attracts them. If they are attracted to video, let’s use video.” One primary school teacher explained she uses technology to arrange games in order to “engage the whole class” and help students remember what they have learned.

The teachers also reported using multimedia presentations. They explained why this activity is becoming so popular: “Children love these multimedia presentations, and when I have time, I do them;” “when there is a presentation it is not just a picture… it is interactive;” “when I started working I did not use Power Point presentations, but now I do… I use it for games in lessons, first or last lessons in the topic, when I want to involve all students;” “it is effective because it is visual and children remember it.” Unlike sentiments they expressed about textbooks, many teachers described how multimedia can be more effective in FLT as it provides both video and audio input for the students.

In primary school classes, stuffed toys and puppets were also observed being used (see Appendix 7). From the lesson observations and teacher interviews it became apparent that the toys were used for a number of purposes. The teachers explained that it boosts student motivation, which is one of the main goals for this stage of learning (see Section 5.3.3 in Chapter 5). They also described how the use of toys
with young children provides opportunities for games, which is the main type of
activity for children of this age group. In two of the observed lessons, puppets were
used to promote a dialogue: a toy in the teacher’s or student’s hand “asked” a
question, and students were expected to respond. As a “guest from the fairy tale”
who “came to see how well you work,” toys also appeared to be used as a behaviour
management tool.

6.2.3. Teaching method: The PP(P) model

The lesson structure for Ukrainian FLT school classrooms is prescribed in the
policies as well as the teacher training textbook (Nikolaieva, 2013) and reflects a
PPP (present-practice-produce) model. This was supported as desirable by the
teachers. One of the teachers indicated: “The present-practice-produce sequence is
most important for me… We need to do it in a sequence, step by step…” One teacher
educator said: “Good presentation and good practice means there will be no
questions in the end, which facilitates good performance of the home work.” Another
teacher educator commented in the follow-up interview: “This is the way it has to
be… It cannot be otherwise, we cannot use something on our own before it has been
introduced to us.”

However, it appeared that the third stage of the model, namely language production,
was omitted in some descriptions provided in the policies. For instance, it is stated in
the Methodological Recommendations for FLT (MOES, 2013a, p. 4) that:

Introduction of the [new] grammar structures should start with the
presentation of the form, meaning and use of the grammar structure. Practice
should be performed orally at first using drills and exercises that require
repetition of the example, substitution of its elements, transformation and
reproduction.

Although it is indicated that the exercises should be communicative, there is no
direct instruction or recommendations about the Produce stage. This lack of attention
to production was also evident during the lessons. In fact, only 2 out of 80 lessons
observed in this study included the whole PPP sequence in one lesson. Usually, the
last stage was left for much later in the sequence of lessons, after new language had been drilled a number of times in a number of different ways. Five teachers indicated that students need a lot of practice in order to speak English at an adequate level and also so that they may “overcome their Ukrainian thinking.” Another teacher explained that she encourages students to speak about their own experiences only after the grammar structure has been presented, explained, drilled, and all exercises completed.

Therefore, while the curriculum and practitioners purport to follow a weak type of CLT (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3.5), their lessons are more reflective of the audio-lingual approach\(^\text{10}\) to language teaching. This approach is underpinned by a behaviourist view of language learning, namely the development of habits through drilling and exercises (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), and the last phase of the PPP sequence, namely Production, is omitted (Johnson, 1996).

On the other hand, however, five participants indicated that they would like to have more opportunities for students to engage in free language production activities in their lessons. For example, one teacher described a lesson she had attended as a part of her professional development which she considered to be a good example to follow. In this lesson, the teacher had students engaged in “free speaking activities” for ten minutes at the end of the lesson, which corresponds with the last stage (Produce) of the model. Four other participants suggested they would need to be given more time in the curriculum in order to allow for the production stage.

In this case, TBLT tasks may provide the possibility for the inclusion and development of the production stage. In this way TBLT may address the locally perceived need to shift from audio-lingual behaviourist practices to the more communicative teaching that has as its primary goal the development of communicative competence.

\(^{10}\) For more detailed explanation, see Literature Review (Section 3.2.1).
6.2.4. Teacher and student roles

In this section, the roles of teachers and students in Ukrainian FL classrooms are examined. This includes a description of professional expectations for teachers and for learners as outlined in the policies and also according to the practitioners themselves. As a part of this, teacher-student and student-student interaction during FL lessons in Ukraine is examined.

*The Country Report: Ukraine* (MOES, 2010a) provides a very clear description of expectations regarding teacher and student roles in Ukrainian FLT. It is stated in this document that “A teacher should closely monitor and assess the progress of students, give them advice, teach how to learn, how to be confident in themselves and seek personal goals” (p. 23). It further states that “the learner is in the centre” of the communicative approach to language teaching. Therefore, a teacher should “involve the learner into the creative cooperation in order to prepare and effectively perform the lesson using the discovery approach, personalized activities and projects” (p. 26).

Despite the merits of such policy goals, as indicated in Chapter 5, this report seems to be written for a European/international audience and is not readily available for teachers working in Ukraine. The only information about this issue included in the local documents used by Ukrainian teachers is one brief mention which suggests that in FLT lessons teachers and students should be seen as partners, describing this relationship as being built upon the “cooperation and productive development of the personality of a teacher and their students on basis of equality in interaction and partnership in learning” (MOES, 2011a, p. 3). Thus it is not surprising that with the exception of one teacher educator, all other participants did not mention this topic at all in their description of their practices without being explicitly asked. In fact, even when asked about teacher and student roles in FLT, most had to take time to think about their answer. Their responses were then often quite short, for example: “A teacher should teach, and students should learn.”
Teacher roles

When prompted, more detailed responses were given by the participants and these revealed that they perceive a teacher to be a role model. A teacher “has to be a leader and has to understand that if she doesn’t make the first step, and show, and lead, nobody will follow her…” As role models, the respondents highlighted that they should be “an example for students.” The participants noted it is expected that Ukrainian teachers’ command of the FL they are teaching should be perfect. As a teacher educator said, “[teachers] have first to know the language perfectly well even if they are teachers in year one… Teachers should know perfect English, BBC English.” Most teachers in this study also appeared to believe that the bar is set very high, with the expectation being for them to be “a very good speaker,” “to start [the lesson] in English [and speak English] to the very end, and to speak native.” The teachers also described how they are expected to be knowledgeable. One respondent in high school indicated that: “[As a teacher], you must study the topic in order to be able to answer all students’ questions.” Another secondary school teacher said: “[A teacher] must have very good knowledge so that students don’t doubt, because if they doubt, it is hard for the teacher to earn trust.”

Other teacher descriptions included reference to being the one in charge, the one who “coordinates students’ work in the right direction,” having “the authority so that children understand that you are the teacher.” Teachers described themselves as having multiple tasks to perform, being “controllers, helpers, assessors, a resource book, whatever.” One participant described how a teacher has “three main functions: to motivate…, to show [what to do and how] …, and to control.” Another said her role as a controller, as perceived by her students, is especially evident when students work in groups. She said they try to make sure they speak English when she can hear them, and signal each other when she is approaching.

There were, however, some alternative views about a teacher’s role, such as being a facilitator, a learner, and a friend. This, the participants claimed, requires a change from the Soviet authoritarian teaching style. In particular, one teacher educator explained that “to facilitate [means] to make the process easier … because when students face difficulties… a teacher… [helps] to understand and to [deal with] all
the scary things.” A secondary school teacher said that a teacher has to “be a friend, of course, … that [students] don’t feel a barrier or think that the teacher only makes them learn, but that they like [studying]…” This view aligned with another teacher educator, describing a teacher as the one who should meet students’ needs rather than just being the source of language knowledge. She claimed that a teacher has to “try to understand students,” and “students need love and connection.” Therefore, these three participants appeared to hold a view that a teacher should not be a knowledge transmitter, but rather assist students in their work and develop a good rapport with them.

Regardless of the teacher’s role, the key function of FL teachers in Ukraine is to motivate their students to study languages. Teachers are expected to “ensure that students are interested.” The practitioners suggested various ways this motivation can be achieved, such as through marking and the feedback they provide, raising awareness about the application of a FL in real life, making connection to their own experience, and by helping students feel successful. Some believe that if students feel successful at learning FLs, they “will like the teacher and learn the language.” As such, a secondary school teacher explained that lesson success and positive outcomes depend on the teacher.

**Student roles**

There was less certainty among the participants regarding student roles. In fact, in most interviews, when asked about the teacher and student roles, the respondents spoke about the role of a teacher, and rarely added anything about learners at all. When asked to comment specifically, they would usually say that students “need to be obedient,” “work hard,” and “do homework.” One secondary school teacher sounded surprised: “The role of a student… *laughs*… to learn … I cannot say what the role of a student should be…”

In more explicit responses, students were mainly described as being receptive learners, doing what they are told to do, with the teachers in the central role. For example, one year three teacher used the metaphor of a sponge: “The teacher is like a
guide, a mentor, and students are like a sponge that absorbs all of that… Students have to work, and the teacher has to direct them.” For one secondary school teacher, paying attention is the main role of a student, as “if [a student] is not attentive, he will miss a lot … but if he is attentive, he will hear the motivational message [that the teacher uses] and remember what the teacher teaches.” Another teacher described it this way: “The teacher should teach, and students should take this knowledge and apply it.”

This perception of receptive learners was also reflected in the lesson plans and in the teachers’ actions during classroom observations. In the majority of the observed lessons, teachers asked or generated questions, either at the beginning of the lesson or during the listening or reading comprehension parts of the lesson. In contrast, students simply responded to the teacher or answered questions from their textbook with the typical instructions preceding such interactions being “Read the question and give your answer.” As a secondary school teacher said: “What about students … I always tell them, if you do everything, learn everything and listen attentively, your success is guaranteed.” The relative passivity of the students was explained by the teacher educator: “In Europe, who takes responsibility for the educational outcomes? A student does. In our society, unfortunately, this attitude is not cultivated.”

Although Ukrainian learners were generally observed to be and also portrayed by the teachers as having passive roles, there were exceptions. For instance, 4 out of 14 participants in Phase 1 mentioned that you cannot make anyone learn something if they do not want to. Instead, they expressed the belief that it is crucial for learners to be motivated and have positive attitudes towards learning in order to participate in activities and cooperate so as to acquire language. One of the teacher educators expressed this view well when she emphasized the need for learning to be “cooperative” and “interactive” because then “it’s not so boring” and provides students with the opportunities “to communicate” and take “responsibility for their learning.” A secondary school teacher said that “students are probably expected to be positive and have a desire to learn… They have to engage in all activities.” Another teacher said that “students should be active in learning all four macro skills.” A year seven teacher said she expected students to be “participants” in the lesson, and
admitted that when students do not look interested or are yawning, she realises things are going wrong.

Teachers also mentioned their attempts to increase learner participation during the lesson. For example, they described how they try to accommodate what their students want to do in their lessons, such as acting upon their suggestions about a change of activity, or considering students’ feedback on new games. A year five teacher stated that “students are the main participants of the learning process and they have to direct it, hinting to the teacher what to pay attention to.” Another way to engage students that was reported in a few interviews was through problem-solving. For instance, one teacher noted that she tries not to give her students ready answers, but when she presents new language material, she tries to “ask a question in such a way that they come up with the answer themselves.” The move towards making the learners more active and central to the learning process was demonstrated in a year three lesson, where the teacher waited for the student to notice and correct their own mistakes on the blackboard, emphasising in the interview that this is the way to help students become independent learners.

At other times, however, there was a clear mismatch between the description provided by the participants and the way they enacted the teacher-student roles. When students’ work was described by the practitioners as “independent” and “creative,” it was often found that in fact it had been closely directed by the teacher and there was only one expected (pre-determined) outcome. For instance, in one of the lesson plans, the outline described how children were expected to “independently” define the theme of the lesson based on the song lyrics. However, the answer “The world is in danger” was determined by the teacher, which means that students had to guess the right answer rather than co-create the theme. Further inconsistencies in the student roles were related to student-student cooperation. This is described next.
Student-student cooperation

Student-student cooperation receives special attention in the current FLT policies in Ukraine. According to the available documents, pair and group work are seen as being essential for the successful implementation of CLT in classrooms. This point is explicitly outlined in the State Standard document where it indicated that the development of communicative and social competencies requires the ability of students to work effectively in a group or a team. Furthermore, it is emphasized in *Methodological Recommendations for FLT* (MOES, 2013a) that the amount of pair and group work that occur in Ukrainian lessons should be increased. This document also states that FLT is expected to facilitate development of students’ personal traits such as empathy and mutual help (p. 2).

These recommendations, however, did not seem to be followed in the observed lessons, nor were they reflected in the lesson plans that were collected. In fact, student-student cooperation was very infrequent compared to teacher-student interaction. For instance, the prescribed activities for monologic and dialogic speaking skills development as reflected in the year six lesson plans were “Development of dialogic speech: a teacher asks students about their fathers,” and “Teacher asks questions about London, students tell what they know.” Despite the open-ended nature of these instructions, during lesson observations at various levels (e.g., year three, five, eleven), students were seen to be simply reading questions from their textbook or being asked questions by the teacher, rarely, if ever, interacting with each other. For example, in one particular year five lesson, for the topic “Hobbies,” one student was asked to come to the blackboard, stand in front of his classmates and answer their questions about his hobbies. However, while students were given an opportunity to ask questions, they actually had to use those provided in their textbook instead of creating their own. When presenting their projects to their classmates in another year five classroom, where students prepared information about different famous bridges around the world, they were asked follow-up questions by the teacher and not a single question was generated by their peers. According to the teacher educator, group work is not happening in the classrooms
because, as she says, “you need to know how to organize it, and it also requires much effort made by the teachers.”

Overall it seems that amongst the teachers, both observed and interviewed, there was little understanding about peer interaction, and what was called group or pair work by the teacher did not necessarily involve student cooperation. For instance, one secondary school teacher provided some examples of pair work from her experience: “the usual matching exercise to find a pair, open the textbooks and read the exercise, and then take the same exercise and mix the letters in words. It is a real pleasure for students to do that.” However, in order to complete this task there is no need for students to interact with each other at all. A similar situation with group work was also apparent in the data. For instance, one year five lesson plan included team work for students where teams were supposed to take turns in naming famous places in London. In another lesson plan, year two students were required to form two teams and then name the colour on the flash card picked by the teacher in a chorus. Although described as team activities, again there was no imperative for the students to interact or collaborate with peers. In one of the observed lessons thirty year four students were divided into three teams according to the three rows in which they were sitting. The sitting pattern did not change and the students who were in one team did not face each other. The task was to guess a picture from its parts, and students did not get to discuss the answer – they just decided on their own and shouted out the answer.

This lack of peer collaboration was explained by the teacher educator: “We do not have this [type of collaboration] when a strong student helps a weak student. Our children do not know how to work in teams … everyone wants to be a leader but not everyone can share, help, scaffold if they know the subject.” An upper secondary school teacher explained it this way: “The strong child thinks: ‘Oh no, we will not be able to say anything and our pair will lose.’” With regard to group work, she added, sometimes a weaker child follows the leader and makes progress, but “there are children who hide behind [the strong learners].”

One of the 17 teacher-produced lesson plans collected in Phase 1 of the study did demonstrate an attempt to promote collaboration between students, with one stage of
the lesson plan called “Group work.” The description provided was that “stronger children organize the work in groups and check how others retell the text – following the ‘continue the thought’ principle.” In this year six lesson plan some students were “environmental experts” who had to ask other students about their response to environmental problems. The questions and answers were not provided beforehand.

In the interview with an upper secondary school teacher she described an example from her practice: “If I start the lesson with, for example, a quotation on the blackboard, I can begin with setting students to work in pairs and discuss [it]. They have a time limit, say two minutes, to think about it, and then each pair chooses the one who will report.” However, as the actual lesson was not observed it is unclear how this was applied by the teacher and enacted by students in the actual classroom.

Further, even when students in the observed lessons were actively engaged in an activity, there was little evidence of interaction in the target language. For instance, in an activity performed in two of the observed lessons, one with year five and another with year nine students, learners were given papers with sentences printed on them which they were required to arrange into a story. While each student was given some sentences to contribute, they were not observed using the FL to cooperate, and if they did interact with their peers at all, it was in their L1.

On the one hand, therefore, it appears from the data that teachers have a predominant role in Ukrainian FLT. On the other hand, there does appear to be a desire to see change in this role. Many suggested that they would like to become facilitators who can motivate their students and at the same time they want their students to demonstrate more initiative, responsibility and cooperation.

6.2.5. Assessment

Ukrainian FLT policies determine both what is to be assessed and ways assessment is to be executed. The MOES document *Inozemni Movy*\(^{11}\) (MOES, 2012a) indicates

---

\(^{11}\) Ukr. for FLs.
that FL assessment in schools should be based on the length of texts and dialogues for reading and listening, as well as length of students’ monological speech, vocabulary and grammar, as well as overall complexity and content of the text/speech. According to Inozemni Movy (MOES, 2012a), there are five main types of assessment used in FLT classrooms across Ukraine. They are current, thematic, semester, and yearly assessment. During year one, students in Ukrainian schools receive feedback in the form of oral or written evaluative comments. The rationale for this is motivated by the psychological characteristics of young children and their emotional response to judgement. Beginning from the second semester of year two marking is based on the 12-point scale, adapted for FLT (MOES, 2011c). In this scale, grades 1-3 indicate a beginning level of achievement, grades 4-6 – an average level, 7-9 – a sufficient level, and 10-12 – a high level of achievement (MOES, 2010a).

From the data it was clear that assessment of the students’ work is consistently performed by teachers during their lessons. Specifically, every lesson plan collected concluded with a statement about the evaluation of students’ work, and all the teachers observed in Phase 1 marked students’ work during or at the end of the lesson. In most cases, marking was accompanied with an explanation. In one of the observed lessons, year four students got marked immediately after completing an activity (e.g., reciting a poem and answering questions). At times, the extent of this was quite surprising. For example, in one case the whole class of students – about 25 students – all received individual marks during the course of one lesson. In another instance, when primary school students prepared a special performance, they received lollipops as encouragement for their creativity. As one teacher explained:

[Students] say: “Why would I write if it does not get checked?” So I give marks and I expect everyone to work. If I have no time today, I will do it tomorrow indicating which exercise they have not done… If I forget, they ask me: “What about the grade?”

Assessment was performed by the teachers, with two exceptions: in one of the observed lessons a student was asked to comment on his own progress, and in another, students evaluated their classmates. The locally perceived importance of
assessing students in every lesson indicates that the activities used by a teacher have to produce a clear outcome that can be assessable using the centralized 12-point scale. This is another aspect of the local FLT that needs to be addressed when planning for innovation.

6.2.6. The use of L1

In the Methodological Recommendations for FLT (MOES, 2013a) it is indicated that Educational Programs for FLT in Ukraine consider students’ experience of L1 acquisition. For instance, it is specified in the Educational Program for Primary School (MOES, 2012b, p. 5) that students of this age group have not formed linguistic understanding in their L1, which means that some grammar structures of the FL should be learned as vocabulary items.

Another L1-related educational outcome identified in the policies is that students should learn “to compare the FL with their mother tongue” (MOES, 2013a, p. 1), especially when students learn letter-sound correlations in year one and when they compare FL letters with those of their L1 (MOES, 2012a). It is indicated in this policy that comparison of L1 and FL at an early age facilitates learning and the development of their language and communicative skills, and it also leads to more complex thinking. Some examples of this emerged during one of the observed lessons undertaken with year four students where the teacher asked whether the word “weaver” from the text referred to a male or a female worker. She drew students’ attention to the fact that in L1 names of professions would most often have different endings depending on a gender of the person, which is not the case in English, where a weaver can be either a man or a woman.

However, some comments made by the participants and observations of some lessons suggested that teacher actions can be contradictory to these policy directions. In particular, it did not seem that the participants gave credence to the importance of learners’ L1 experience in FL learning. For example, the teacher educator said that at the beginning of the FL lesson students “know nothing,” and by the end of the lesson or a course they should be able to realise that they “know something.” Similarly, a
teacher quoted one famous Ukrainian educator in that children come to school as empty vessels, and the teacher’s role is to fill those vessels with knowledge. This means that student proficiency in FL is seen as non-existent at the beginning of the formal instruction.

In addition to this, based on what they said during informal discussions, it also appeared to be the belief of many teachers that they feared that if they gave students more freedom to communicate, it would be hard to control FL use and students would switch to their L1 (because it would be an easier way for them to express themselves). This was the case both for primary and secondary school teachers. For instance, one upper secondary school teacher said: “In upper secondary school… you start the lesson speaking English, and speak English during the lesson… You involve students in doing the same. You don’t translate words or phrases. Therefore, we practice having them explain something in English without translation.” During lesson observations in this study, whenever students switched to their L1 to discuss something, the teacher quickly stopped the conversation, or asked students to speak English only.

It can be concluded, therefore, that there is an overall tendency to restrict L1 use in the classroom for the benefit of FL practice. There also appeared to be little understanding of the possible benefit from using or building on L1 proficiency in FLT.

6.3. Characteristics of FLT practices in Ukraine

This section describes the characteristics of FLT practices in Ukrainian schools based on the constructs that emerged from the analysis of the Phase 1 data (see Chapter 4 Section 4.5.5 for coding procedures) and illustrates an interplay between desired and actual classroom practices. This includes transformation, a struggle for meaning, connection to real life, structured environment, limited flexibility, and under-resourcing.
6.3.1. Transformation

The discourse of change, or transformation, found in the FLT curriculum in Ukraine (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3.1) was also present in school practices. The data obtained during interviews and lesson observations suggested that there are different approaches to change in the Ukrainian school context. However, while there seemed to be an overall openness to new ideas among teachers and teacher educators, the terms “innovation” and “change” were approached with caution by some. In addition, there appeared to be a focus on technology as the way to innovate FL practices.

The majority of teachers interviewed in the study said that they are open to new ideas. For instance, one teacher said: “I love contemporary methodology. I try new ideas all the time, and then I can say oh it works or it doesn’t work.” Some of the participants indicated that they look for an opportunity to learn “from the outside.” In their interviews, six teachers shared their excitement about the international projects and competitions their schools participated in, such as those organized by Cambridge educational publishers, or student exchange programs. These teachers seem to appreciate such opportunities because they provide motivation for their students to learn the language and develop creativity, to apply knowledge and skills in real-life situations, and for the school “to show what we can do.” One of the teacher educators spoke about an opportunity she had: “I brought cooperative and interactive learning from the USA more than two years ago … my student teachers are very comfortable with contemporary learning … I am open to innovation.”

It was found that many of the teacher participants seem to associate innovation with technology. This is exemplified in the comment made by one of the teachers: “what about innovations, now we are using different multimedia projects.” Further, it seems that these teachers make a direct connection between their professionalism and the level of their technology-related skills. This was evident in comments such as the one from the teacher educator who said: “I am a contemporary teacher because I learned computer technology when I was in the United States.” At the same time, a year seven teacher said she considers herself a conservative because she does not use
Electronic media during her lessons and has no interactive board in her classroom, mainly because she is not an expert in this area.

Nine teachers described how the availability of technological devices has a significant influence on their practices. For example, a teacher from a non-specialised school said with a sigh: “We are lacking facilities, we do not have smartboards. I think we have limited conditions for quality language teaching.” One of the teachers who does have access to technological resources described them as a “step forward.” A year seven teacher said “we used to teach with traditional methods, but now we practice the use of a Smartboard … Children love those multimedia presentations, and when I have time I make them.”

According to the participants, technology is also seen as a way to create a more authentic and engaging atmosphere in the lesson. Two teachers specifically mentioned how the use of videos and tapes of recorded native speakers helps them bring some authenticity into their classrooms. (Note: More examples of the use of authentic materials are provided in Section 6.3.3 below.) The teachers also described how technology helps them to motivate and engage learners, especially the use of videos.

However, despite what the participants indicated in their interviews there was little evidence that technology has resulted in innovation or transformation in Ukrainian FLT. In fact, lesson observation data seems to suggest that availability of new technology had not lead to a significant change in teaching methods. For instance, a year two teacher said “we used to sit and draw the pictures, do you remember, a cat, a dog, we sat and cut out something from somewhere … now we have these great flashcards.” However, during her lesson the flashcards on her computer and Power Point slides were used in the same way as the pictures had been used previously: students were expected to either name an object on the screen, or come to the Smartboard one by one to arrange vocabulary items into groups or match them to the pictures. These activities cannot be characterised as communicative (see Chapter 5).

The entrenched nature of the methodology was described by one teacher from a non-specialised school: “you want to do something interesting… you try, and you even
have the technology, but it does not help much…” Three other practitioners also indicated that innovation was often the same old way with a new name. One teacher educator gave an example, describing that back in the 1970s schoolchildren in (Soviet) Ukraine had a “portfolio,” or a folder, where they stored vocabulary books and grammar rules, as well as their creative work. According to this teacher educator, the Language Portfolio introduced more recently by the Council of Europe and adapted for Ukrainian schools is, in the essence, the same idea. For her it is not an innovation, but a reminder of how this tool can benefit learning. Another teacher educator extended this in the following statement:

We think that when novice teachers are using modern technologies in class, a smart board or whatever, that is innovation, but I am deeply convinced that innovation [is when] we take something from the old and interpret that in an innovative way…

Therefore, for these practitioners not everything that is called “innovation” is actually new or even necessarily better.

Lastly, it appeared from the practitioners’ responses that it was easier for them to understand and trial an innovation in a small scale way. They spoke about the use of a new activity or using new technology within the lesson. To give an example, when explaining their openness to change and the necessity to combine old and new ideas in teaching, three teachers described how they introduced new games into their classroom to see whether their students will like them or not. However, more fundamental changes to the teaching approach or methodology, such as moving away from the PPP lesson model, were not discussed in this context.

Some of the key changes that teachers in Ukraine did mention and seemed eager to embrace included the focus on meaningful communication, connection of teaching to real life, and an increasing variety of facilities and resources. The way these manifest in the policies, and as demonstrated by the participants’ responses and during the lesson observations is described in the sections below. The aspects that can potentially challenge such change (e.g., the lack of genuine communication, limited flexibility, and structured environment) or even inhibit it altogether (e.g., under-
resourcing) are essential considerations in change management and so are also addressed below.

6.3.2. A struggle for meaning

The FLT policies in Ukraine promote communicative teaching, and, in fact, the requirement for lessons to be “communication-directed” is clearly stated as a priority. For example, it is required that activities used in FL lessons should be “related to the … use of the language as a means of communication” (MOES, 2012b, p. 8). How this translated into practice and the way teachers make sense of this in their classrooms is outlined next.

It appeared that the participants in this study do attempt to include some level of meaningful communication into their lessons. This was achieved in three main ways: during introductory “warm-up” interactions with the students, by means of contextual presentation of the new material, and through project work usually performed at the end of the lesson cycle on a topic.

First, seven teachers reported that they use communicative activities at the beginning of their lesson. In particular, they mentioned beginning their lessons by giving a topic/proverb/question to the students to discuss. A secondary school teacher said: “I come and give students the topic, and we start working in groups or pairs, or all together, and everyone expresses their opinion.” In such discussions, she said, everyone is supposed to express their opinion. Another secondary school teacher described how she finds interesting information and uses it at the beginning of the lesson: “‘Who is this person?’ ‘What is he/she famous for?’ And only then do I turn to the textbook.” Another teacher said:

It happens at the beginning of the lesson … we start with what we call ‘speaking warm-up’ when a student is expected to express their opinion, to say ‘do you like today’s weather,’ ‘yes I do’ or ‘I don’t’ and so on. Sometimes I ask them ‘What have you done today?’ or ‘What has happened today?’ and then it is expected that the student uses words and grammar
other than that studied in this lesson, but what they have learned before, or they should ask if they don’t know how to say something.

Another way Ukrainian FL teachers engaged their students in communication was by presenting new language material (the first stage of the PPP sequence) “in context, in a situation.” This was done to help students see how the target structure can be used in communication. As mentioned by a teacher educator, one example of this can be the presentation of the Present Perfect tense by telling students what the teacher “has done today,” and then asking them what they have done. In many lessons observed in this study, teachers would have students read the text and draw their attention to the new words and structures in the process of reading or by checking their comprehension. Sometimes students had to guess the meaning from the context or think of other situations where they could use the same language. Although often followed by drilling, this approach does appear to be an attempt to introduce meaning prior to form.

Communication was also incorporated into lessons by way of project work. From the data it seems that this approach is a relatively recent development in the local FLT context and has become popular among both primary and secondary school teachers. This is not surprising given that project work is recommended by the MOES (MOES, 2012a) as a means to encourage students to participate in creative group work and to motivate them to learn FLs. For example, one primary school teacher described a project her students did on holidays and added: “I did not expect they would be so creative.” According to the participants, project work is approached and assessed as a high-level creative task.

While the policy promotes using group work for projects, the majority of teachers admitted their students do them on their own, and mainly as a home task. The project instructions are usually provided in the textbook with explicit descriptions of the steps, which enables learners to accomplish them without direct input from the teacher. For example, in the coursebook for year five students titled Dive into English (Burenko & Mykhailyk, 2005), the following instruction is provided at the end of the topic about sports: “Carry out your own sports survey and introduce your
results. Start like this: What is your favourite kind of sports?” (p. 100). An example survey is provided in the book as a model to follow.

When discussing the possibility for students to do such work during the lesson, the teachers who participated in this study did not agree that this was a good idea. First, they suggested that there was a lack of resources and no access to the Internet in school to allow this to happen. They also indicated the lack of time within the lesson for the students to produce a good quality outcome. Only one teacher described how she had made attempts to include some projects in her lessons with upper secondary school students, but those, she admitted, had to be very simple in order to fit in. For example, she once asked the students to draw a car or a house of their dream and describe it to each other. She added that the students only had a piece of paper and a pencil to draw, and had to come up with very simple designs within ten minutes.

*The lack of genuine communication*

While most teachers seemed to be eager to encourage communication, the observation of lessons suggested this happened very rarely. One reason for this appeared to be the reliance on the questions provided in the textbook – questions that were not necessarily relevant or interesting for the students. In one of the observed lessons in an upper secondary school, students were required to give their opinions, but these were restricted by the phrases and sentences they had to use as provided in the textbook. In a similar way, the convergent nature of the questions that were asked meant that the students were not provided with an opportunity to express their true feelings or attitudes. For example, in a year four lesson the teacher was observed to ask: “Is it good to be cheerful, generous, kind?” to which students replied “yes” or “no,” but they were not asked “why” they thought it was good.

Even if students were directly asked what they thought or felt, they were not asked to extend, explain, or discuss their position. During a lesson observed in an upper secondary class, students were asked to express their opinion about music and art. However, they did not interact meaningfully together, instead they spoke one at a time without discussion or any feedback from their classmates and it was unclear
whether it was genuine self-expression (as opposed to rehearsed answers). In a similar way, when working on a dialogue, year seven students were required to use the language and structures from the limited choice in the textbook, rather than producing their own meaning and using their own language resources.

The lack of genuine communication was highlighted by an incident that happened in the year two classroom. The teacher wrote an example of a grammar rule on the blackboard (He, She, It – likes) to remind students what they had learned in the lesson. Then students read sentences written on the blackboard, and responded to the teachers’ questions:

Teacher (T): The boy likes football. Why s?
Student 1 (S1): Present Simple, the boy - he.
Teacher (T): They like carrots. Why like?
Student 2 (S2): Because they.

This was followed by a written exercise where the students practised this particular rule. The topic (likes and dislikes) appeared to be engaging for the students, and they wanted to share their ideas with each other. One student commented: “Why do they like carrots?” [i.e., Why would anyone like carrots?] and asked his neighbour: “Do you like [carrots]?” Then the students started speaking about this in Ukrainian. However, such meaning-based interaction was not encouraged by the teacher, a switch to L1 was quickly stopped, and students’ attention was redirected back to the grammar rule.

A teacher educator provided further support for these observations:

During the lesson, communicative approach is meant to be realised by organising language learning through communication and for communication. Unfortunately, observation of practice shows that … there is vocabulary, grammar, reading, translation, learning topics by heart, all separate activities… We don’t learn the language to communicate but in order to learn the language, and it results in children knowing lists of words and grammar rules, but they cannot combine these together to express their thoughts [i.e., meaning].
This teacher educator further described it as “teachers filling their students with knowledge as vessels.” She said: “We fill, fill, and fill, like when I see word lists memorizing, and it makes me very sad.” She illustrated this with an example: “Year three students can be given a text which is the level of year seven to learn by heart. This results in students learning the text, retelling it, and forgetting it the following day.”

In summary, both the policies and the teachers indicated that it would be desirable to shift from language forms to meaning. While some teachers used the warm-up time, contextualization and projects to achieve this, observations revealed an absence of genuine communication during most lessons. There is, therefore, a clear need to find ways for more meaningful communication in classrooms. Although the teachers struggled to include meaning making as part of their practices, they did express beliefs and demonstrated through their action that pedagogy should connect to real life. This is addressed in the following section.

6.3.3. Connection to real life

According to one of the teachers in this study, educational innovation should be “connected to real life.” Indeed, this feature reflects a range of requirements and expectations about classroom practices that are articulated in the Ukrainian policy documents. To a certain extent these were also reflected in the interviews and observations. These include the use of real-life language and reflection of real-life situations in the teaching process, its relevance to students’ everyday life, and emphasis on practical application of knowledge and skills acquired in FL lessons.

Real-life language

FLT policies in Ukraine emphasize the importance of integrating authentic or real-life language in FL lessons. The Methodological Recommendations for FLT (MOES, 2013a, p. 3) require that “relevant authentic material (texts, illustrations, etc.)” should be used to support “the principle of socio-cultural direction of the educational process.” This is also stated in the document Inozemni Movy (MOES, 2012a) which
contains a requirement that “in years three and four … children [should be able to] use communicative items of spoken language that have emotional connotation and are used by the native speakers” (p. 8). Students are expected to learn language through the use of “authentic samples of FL (e.g., jazz songs, child poetry, fairy tales, stories and others)” and use language that reflects “real-life communication” (p. 7). It is also recommended that in secondary school students learn to read printed material of various genres, and understand radio and TV programs in a FL (MOES, 2013b).

The participants in this study seemed to share this desire to promote authentic language use. Some teachers complained that the textbooks they have to use do not facilitate connection to real-life experiences. For instance, one teacher indicated she does not like working with the locally published textbooks as they “do not sound like good English.” Another teacher commented: “A textbook should combine various types of activities and be interesting. Most importantly, it needs to contain live language… that is used today.”

As an alternative to the textbook’s stilted language, some teachers reported using additional materials that they believed to be more authentic. In search of such materials, the teachers turn to the World Wide Web. For instance, they search for idioms as they believe this to be one of the key features of authentic English. “We were told that when you come to England, there are idioms everywhere,” one teacher said, “Something like ‘it’s raining cats and dogs.’” A secondary school teacher shared her desire to organize a club where students could “watch movies in English and speak and discuss things.” She said, “I teach world literature in year eleven, so during English lessons [with these students] I try to discuss a book or a novel. I am aware of what they might know, and help them say it in English… I also encourage [my students] to read English-language books and periodicals [where possible].” Another teacher said she takes the opportunity to show her students episodes from a movie, especially if it is mentioned in the coursebook. Another teacher, whose only element of technology in the classroom was a tape recorder, said she uses Christmas carols and other songs to expose her students to authentic language.
**Real-life situations**

The Ukrainian FLT policies (MOES, 2012a, 2013a, 2013b) also recommend that teachers create speech situations during their lessons. These are expected to “move learning closer to the real conditions [of communication]” (MOES, 2013b, p. 7).

As one of the participants explained, these are “some typical situations transferred to the English lesson.” Another teacher explained it as “asking for and giving directions, or giving advice to each other – something one would do in real life.” Yet another teacher provided the following examples:

Sometimes I say: Imagine that I am a guest from England, you are my translator – and we start speaking. I speak in English, and the student translates. It also can be a role play: you are a shop assistant, and you are a customer. Come and buy some bread or whatever you want to buy.

To support reality in lessons, it is suggested that the instructions given by teachers imitate real-life scenarios. As one teacher educator explained it: “instead of telling them to read the text, you can say: let’s read a tale, a story, or a poem – something we read in our own language in real life.”

However, in the observed lessons students were mainly instructed to “read the text,” “do the exercise” or “write down five sentences.” Teachers were not observed to include role plays or real-life situations in their lessons (with the exception of Teacher 2 as described in Chapter 8), which indicates that this is not a widespread practice.

**Relevance to students’ lives**

The participants in the study emphasized that situations and discussions in the lesson should not only reflect real-life in general, but also be “close to the children, close to their feelings.” A year seven teacher explained it this way:

In order to connect teaching with real life… you need to create a lot of situations during the lesson. Even if it is about the politics, or the environment, everything has to be connected to the home town, politics and
life in Ukraine. You may use what is there in the textbook, but adapt it for your students.

Some of the topics used with the students in the observed lessons were their weekend activities and holidays, family and pets, and technology. During a year seven lesson, for instance, students were asked to complete the sentence “While I was going to school…” based on their actual experiences that morning. Likewise, in a series of observed lessons about Pets, Shopping, and Water Sports students had an opportunity to complete the sentences or ask questions about their preferences. In an interview, one teacher talked about her lesson on the topic “Networking. Technologies. Computers and the Internet” that had been observed the previous day. In this lesson, her students engaged in a discussion about computers and modern technology. She said: “I asked them a lot of questions about what websites they use … Do you use Facebook, do you use VKontakte? It’s very close to them and they were really very active answering these questions.” Two other teachers also mentioned technology as an interesting and engaging topic due to its connection to the learners’ direct experiences and hobbies.

There were, however, challenges for teachers when attempting to connect to students’ life. For example, two teachers described how the content of textbooks quickly becomes irrelevant to students. To illustrate, these teachers referred to the text in their coursebook about Kylie Minogue and Robbie Williams, celebrities with whom their young students were not familiar. They claimed this discouraged their students’ participation. Indeed, the same thing happened during one of the observed lessons in a different school where teenage students had no knowledge about the Hollywood actors described in the textbook.

The teachers’ comments presented in this section suggest a high level of awareness about student needs, and how making lessons relevant can facilitate motivation and learning. The teachers also described how mainstream textbooks and resources are often not sufficient to facilitate this connection and so teachers have to spend additional time finding and preparing materials that resonate with their students.
Practical application

As a key part of their teaching, the participants indicated that they believe their students should understand why they learn a FL and how to apply FL knowledge and skills in practice. A teacher educator explained it this way: “The main aspect [of FLT] is to prepare [students] for real life, for communication… because students of the 21st century should have to … apply [what is taught] in real-life situations.” A year five teacher noted: “The most important is… to teach students to communicate, speak, because they will need this skill in their life outside school.” A secondary school teacher said: “To my mind, the main idea is that children can speak in the foreign-language environment, and those who travel do not lose themselves, but feel confident to participate in any conversation.” Furthering this point, an upper secondary school teacher noted that the aim of language learning is to help her students find a good job, meet friends, and be able to read famous FL books in their original language.

Seven teachers reported that they try to communicate to their students that a FL is something they all will need in life. For example, a year four teacher said: “I remind children all the time that they will need this in their future, modern life is impossible without a FL… they should see that language skills are an integral part of modern life and modern society.” A secondary school teacher explained she appealed to students’ interests “so that they see how what we are studying can be applicable in their future life, and that they can go to the shops and use these words and phrases they need.” According to one of the teacher educators, FLT provides a vocational focus for students in terms of language skills for their future workplace. Therefore, she feels that there is a need to tailor FL classes for such things as English for future Linguists or Economists.

Some teachers reported that student exchange programs were a good way to motivate FL learning at school as it provided very tangible and practical benefits: those who did well had a higher chance to be selected for the program, and subsequently appeared to feel more confident. One teacher indicated that: “We have Flex which is a student exchange program … Every year some children from our school go to America and live with a family where they speak only English.” The year three
teacher from the same school also mentioned these opportunities: “There is a possibility for [students] to go abroad … and when they arrive, they tell us that they understood local people… and knew how to ask about things…”

However, it appeared to be harder for the teachers from non-specialized and especially village schools to connect learning with practical application. A village teacher reported that her students generally assume they will not need FLs in their future. This teacher described how in the village even “parents tell them they do not need English.” Therefore, it was that teacher’s mission to convince her students that learning a FL is “a door to so much.” For her, alternatives were needed such as watching authentic movies, arranging meetings with native speakers or people who have learned the language and used it to achieve success in life. She claimed her desire is to teach students that “this is not a fairy tale but reality, that you can have a better life, [language knowledge] can really help you.”

In summary, both the policies and teachers in Ukraine encourage FLT practices that are connected to the life outside of the classroom, and particularly those related to students’ experiences. The teachers suggested that this helps their students to learn the language in ways that enable practical application. However, the findings also suggest that these intentions are rarely applied in practice, and challenges of making real-life connections are stronger in regional and non-specialised schools where students have fewer opportunities to travel, participate in exchange programs, and whose parents are not supportive of FLT. This is another area where pedagogic tasks based on real-life tasks (see Literature Review Section 3.2.3) can potentially address the local need and build on what teachers are already doing.

6.3.4. **Structured environment**

Another significant feature of the current context of FLT in Ukraine is the structured environment. This was evident in lesson planning and timing, classroom management, movement, and the use of visual aids.
Planning and timing

As evident from the interviews and lesson observations, Ukrainian FLT lessons were subject to detailed lesson planning and timing guidelines. The teachers who participated in this study indicated that they like these. For instance, a secondary school teacher explained that a successful lesson is “when everything has been prepared, thought through.” For her, “good preparation and good equipment” assisted her in delivering the material the way which is the best for students to learn, “logical and sequential.” It is also preferred for this detailed planning to be provided in the materials for teacher support as otherwise it is very time-consuming. For instance, one teacher said she considers herself to be lucky that her school supplied her with a Teacher’s Book “where everything is included, lessons and lesson plans.”

Thorough planning is also believed to help teachers use the time available for lessons more effectively. According to the teacher educator, teachers have to be “very organized with their time” – they have “to tell students how much time they need to complete [an activity], to be very organized all the time.” She provided the following framework for the timing of an effective lesson:

- A lesson has 45 minutes, and of course we need a time limit of when to start,
- how long to warm up, how long the central part of the lesson should take,
- how much time is taken for practice, then evaluation and setting the home task, and giving an explanation.

In line with this view, one teacher said: “You have to know how much time you need for an activity, especially when you are planning something very important.” Another teacher explained that it feels uncomfortable when you do not finish an activity before the bell rings, but planning and timing can help avoid this situation.

This might also mean leaving some activities out. One of the teachers explained that she tells her students to read books in a FL in their free time because there is “no time to do something additional within the lesson, where we need to have listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills development – things that must be included in the lesson.”
Classroom management

For the participants in this study, it also seemed crucial to maintain discipline and to avoid too much noise in order to have a successful lesson. As one of the teachers described it, “For us, first of all, there should be discipline, and only then you can start the lesson.” She further explained that, for an effective lesson, “children need to be organized,” a classroom has to be “clean,” and the atmosphere has to be “calm.”

The maintenance of silence during the lesson was deemed by the participants an important prerequisite of effective learning. During the observed lessons, students were asked to work quietly and not to disturb others, and except for dialogue work only one person was allowed to speak at a time. One teacher noted: “We do not like noise… Otherwise, there [could be] problems with the teacher next door: not everyone understands that language lessons require speaking.” One year seven teacher recalled how teaching discipline was initially a priority over FL teaching. She said: “I had classes where I did not even speak about English, first they had to be taught to sit through the lesson.”

Another way Ukrainian teachers maintained discipline and had students organized was through the neat handwriting. Before doing a written exercise, students in the observed lessons wrote down the day and date, then they titled their work with labels such as Classwork or Homework, Dictation or Exercises, and this was observed to occur across all school ages. Younger children were especially closely controlled to ensure their writing was neat and that they followed the instructions, such as writing one letter in every second square or writing the words in a Dictation either in a line or in a column (see Appendix 8).

Movement

The structured environment in Ukrainian FLT lessons was further evident in the restricted movement around the classroom. In all classes observed in the study apart from three (n=77), from primary to upper secondary school, students were sitting facing the blackboard, with the teacher in front. Whatever the size of the classroom, most of it was occupied by the desks. The spaces between the rows of desks and in
front of the blackboard were rarely used during the lessons. The teacher was the only one to walk around the classroom, checking students’ work and providing individual assistance. Desks were heavy and never seen to be moved (with only one exception as described in Chapter 8).

Interestingly, to compensate for this lack of movement, primary and secondary school teachers were observed using activities that required students to move within the available space. They had students come to the blackboard one by one, catch and throw a ball while seating at their desks, or recite a poem accompanied with actions (which occurred during a short break in the lesson called the “physical education minute”). The teachers emphasized how important they thought it was for their students to move during the lesson. A year two teacher said: “It is very motivating for them, for little kids, to work at the blackboard, for them to move as if doing a physical exercise, not like sitting in one spot all the time.”

*Visual aids*

Although visual aids were widely used in FLT in Ukraine, their use seemed to be restricted. They were typically language-specific visuals that illustrated a particular grammar or vocabulary item. As observed, classrooms used for language teaching had some permanent FLT-related posters on the walls, such as maps of Great Britain, the English alphabet or grammar tables. In some cases, there were also photos or paintings illustrating some views of the countries of the FL, such as one of Big Ben. Visual aids for the lesson were located on the blackboard or in the immediate space around it. They were put up for one lesson or a series of lessons on the same topic, and then taken down. One of the school teachers said that they were not allowed to put too many visual aids in the classroom as it was believed to distract students.

For the same reason, students’ worksheets or creative crafts were not put on display in the classroom. Students wrote in their copybooks where all pages were stitched together, and whenever projects were completed on separate pieces of paper, they were collected by the teacher, marked and stored in thick folders. According to one of the teachers, even if they wanted to put up some visual aids elsewhere in the
classroom, it would be difficult to stick them to the wall without leaving marks. There was only one classroom where student-produced posters were seen hanging on the wall (see Appendix 9). When the teacher was revisited a year later, there was nothing on the walls, suggesting that it is still a rare practice.

This level of structure within the FLT practices in Ukraine appears to be mainly seen by the local practitioners as positive and facilitative of effective teaching, which suggests it should be accounted for if any new approach or materials are developed for this context. In particular, FLT innovations would need to fit within the lesson timeline, provide sufficient guidelines regarding the timing and management of activities, and ways to either comply with or overcome the movement restrictions.

6.3.5. Limited flexibility

In Chapter 5, the concept of flexibility was described in relation to the FLT curriculum. In this chapter, different levels of flexibility are represented in relation to FLT practices. Sometimes these practice-related aspects promoted flexibility as yet another way of transformation of the FLT practices, but at other times they inhibited what occurred. A description of these is provided below.

Facilities

At the school level, flexibility in FLT practices was evident in the availability (or not) of various facilities, but also it was reflected in the ways teachers coped with the lack of such resources.

The range of facilities was particularly reflected in the various size of the classrooms used for FLT. As explained by the teachers, however, there are not enough FL-specialised rooms in Ukraine and, instead, classrooms are multifunctional and used not only for language teaching, but for a variety of types of lessons. For example, some of the observed lessons took place in large rooms despite small number of students. In other cases, due to the lack of appropriate classrooms large classes were taught in small rooms.
Where classroom sizes and availability of facilities were an issue, it was particularly problematic because of the impact these had on the approaches used in FLT. When a teacher educator expressed her desire to develop interactive learning in Ukrainian schools, she admitted that

the problem number one is too many students in one group … If it is an ordinary school, sometimes there are up to 27 students in a group and … there is only 45 minutes, and everyone has to speak out in class because they will not have somebody to talk with [in a FL] when they leave the class …

The availability of facilities, including adequate-sized classrooms, did not necessarily depend on location. Some regional schools were better equipped than city schools. To a certain extent, this was related to the initiative of local staff. Where the school leader (i.e., the Headmaster or the Head of the FL Department) was energetic, enthusiastic, and where parents were supportive, schools were thriving. In some cases where there were not enough classrooms for all the FL groups, school administration refurbished other rooms. In one particular school, some bathrooms were rearranged into English-language classrooms. The teacher educator said: “Schools are trying to do that to provide more classrooms for FL lessons, some even arrange new classrooms in a basement.” This provides the FL teachers with an opportunity to divide classes into three groups of eight to ten children instead of having one large class, which is expected to promote greater interaction and a closer alignment to communicative language teaching. In another school, a primary school teacher described how students’ parents assist in overcoming the shortage of some resources: “In year one classrooms, if we do not have the toys we need for FL lessons, I ask parents [to provide them]. All the toys I have here are brought from homes.”

**Textbook choice**

An area that appeared to significantly restrict school flexibility is textbook choice. It seemed that specialized schools have a better choice of textbooks than others. Although according to the *Country Report: Ukraine* (MOES, 2010a, p. 23) FLT in Ukraine must ensure “wide choice of … teaching materials,” the majority of the
teacher participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the choice of textbooks provided at their schools. Teachers from non-specialized schools specifically mentioned that the textbook choice in their schools is very limited.

The majority of the schools and individual teachers said they prefer foreign publications. Even when school administration favours locally published materials, teachers try to supplement these with those obtained elsewhere. The aim of combining local and foreign textbook by the teachers is to overcome the deficiencies of each: foreign textbooks lack information about the home country and do not cater for specific features of the students’ L1, while locally published textbooks were described by many practitioners as lacking “the culture of the country’s language” and providing vocabulary that is stilted and not relevant to everyday life.

Although the combination of various textbooks has become possible in Ukraine due to their availability, it is not always possible for teachers to make use of them. For instance, a secondary school teacher from the village school explained: “If we look at village schools and the textbooks we have here … we could choose to use foreign publishers, but our students’ parents would not be able to afford them.”

Therefore, it was apparent from the data that the flexibility in terms of facilities and resources in the Ukrainian FLT is restricted at the school level. While schools where the administration and parents are supportive of changes that will help overcome these restrictions, the practitioners from the school where this is not the case feel that the effectiveness of their FLT is undermined. This and other issues related to under-resourcing are addressed in Section 6.3.6 below.

6.3.6. Under-resourcing

The data collected in Phase 1 interviews suggested that Ukrainian FLT practices are influenced by under-resourcing. According to the participants there are two aspects of this. At the school level, it is reflected in the limited access to teaching materials and technology. This is further exacerbated by the low income of educators, which in turn restricts their contribution at a personal level.
A limited choice of teaching materials was mentioned by many teachers as one of the manifestations of under-resourcing. A secondary school teacher explained: “It would be great to have a bigger choice of textbooks such as those published by Longman, but they are expensive and there is no money [in school] to purchase them, so parents have to pay for it… They don’t want to do it.”

The limitation in non-specialized schools seemed to be greater than in specialized ones. One teacher from a non-specialized school said: “Schools cannot, well first of all the government cannot supply schools with technology, such as smartboards.” Another teacher mentioned that she likes singing with her students but they can only do that if there is a tape-recorder available, and it often is shared amongst a large number of teachers. The absence of printing facilities was mentioned as a further obstacle to good teaching.

The practitioners argued that this situation pushed many teachers to meet their teaching needs by their own means. For instance, some teachers said that they use their own facilities, such as laptops, in teaching. However, due to the very low income of teachers in Ukraine, this appeared to bring about another struggle. One secondary school teacher said: “What about teaching aids, [I wish] we did not have to buy things ourselves, but that they were supplied, or at least teachers had a [financial] ability to buy them, because there are many things you could do, but you can’t.” Moreover, teachers’ low salary resulted in the need to undertake extra jobs, which reduced the amount of time left for teaching-related activities. One secondary school teacher shared that teachers’ salary “pushes teachers to look for additional sources of income and to work long hours… so I don’t have time to find supplementary material for the textbooks we have.” A teacher educator also commented on this issue:

University graduates don’t want to receive a salary of a school teacher so schools are in constant need of teachers … a 21-year-old needs to provide for the family, rent an accommodation, and it is expensive… After six-seven lessons [at school] they have three-four private lessons … This is an economic problem.
If not addressed in the early stages of change implementation through the provision of necessary resources, it seems that this aspect of FLT practices in Ukraine can significantly undermine potential innovation efforts.

6.4. Chapter summary

This chapter describes the relationships between the requirements for and beliefs about FLT practices in Ukrainian schools, and the actual practices. The Ukrainian policies prescribe an increase in communicative and engaging practices, as well as the use of authentic materials. In most cases, practitioners appeared to support these ideas and articulated the ways they thought these could be applied in practice. At the same time, however, the actual practices observed in lessons and as documented in lesson plans revealed that actual application of these ideas pose a number of challenges for local educators.

In particular, lesson observations revealed that student cooperation, genuine communication and real-life activities are still mainly a goal rather than reality in the Ukrainian FLT classrooms. The teachers were also found to approach the FL proficiency as developing from “a blank page” instead of building on students’ proficiency in L1, and they discouraged their students from using L1 in the lessons. As a result, genuine communication starting in L1 was stopped by the teachers instead of being encouraged and used to support the development of a FL. In addition, it was revealed that teachers are expected to evaluate students in every lesson and follow the PPP model without being given any alternatives, which may create further constraints to developing communicative practices.

Regarding the processes of change and transformation happening in the local FLT, teachers and teacher educators expressed a strong interest in practices outside Ukraine, cooperation with foreign partners in the sphere of FLT, and the use of technology to facilitate learning. At the same time, it was revealed that innovation does not always result in the change of teaching practices. It was also found that there is a restricted flexibility of teaching facilities, and that lesson planning in terms of time and space remains highly structured. Teachers also appeared to be lacking in resources and approaches that would enable them to reproduce “the spirit of the FL”
or paralinguistic cultural aspects of communication such as manners, gestures, and behaviour – the goal which is also indicated in the policies.

A positive aspect of this is that teachers do find various ways to overcome challenges they face in FL practices, especially when supported by the school administration, and they are open to try new ideas within their structured environment. Some schools provide support by refurbishing buildings to provide more classrooms, leading to a decrease in the number of students per group. Teachers also reported engaging students in meaningful communication; using additional teaching resources, and the Internet in particular; combining “compulsory” textbooks with “desirable” ones; having parents supply teaching aids for the lessons; and using movement in classrooms in creative ways.
Chapter 7: Tasks in Ukrainian FLT: Current situation and teacher perceptions

7.1. Overview

While Chapters 5 and 6 provide a thick description and analysis of the current FLT situation in Ukraine, since the current study focuses on a particular prospective innovation (i.e., TBLT) it is essential to elicit the current level of awareness about this approach. In this chapter, current understandings about tasks in Ukrainian FLT are investigated, based on the findings from Phases 1 and 2 of the study. First, documents and teacher interviews were analysed to explore whether, and if so, how the term *task* is used in the local FLT context. The findings from this analysis are in Section 7.2. Originally, the next aim was to examine the ways local practitioners understand and apply task-based approaches in their teaching. However, as it was found that TBLT tasks are not currently represented either in Ukrainian FLT policies or practices, the participants in this study were not able to provide their perspectives on the use of tasks. To overcome this, a presentation about tasks and TBLT was prepared and conducted by the researcher in three of the participating schools, and teachers’ feedback elicited and analysed. This analysis is provided in Section 7.3.

7.2. Current understanding of tasks in the field

This section reports on the data from Phase 1 of the study and focuses specifically on tasks. First, it provides an overview of the instances where the term “task” (Ukr. *zavdannia*) is used in the national policies, with the consideration of how this compares to the understanding of task as represented in the international TBLT literature. Next, the perceptions of tasks, and particularly the ways these are distinguished from other learning activities by teachers, teacher educators and policy makers are investigated.

In the Ukrainian FLT policies, learning activities are classified into groups according to their function. Table 7.1 combines and compares the description of these activities as outlined in the two different sources – the *Educational Program for Primary*
School (MOES, 2012b) and a commonly used teacher-education textbook (Nikolaieva, 2013).

Table 7.1. *Classification of learning activities in Ukrainian FLT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>language exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>movni vpravy</em>)</td>
<td>To prepare students for communication by targeting the acquisition of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>semi-speech exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>umovno-movlenniiev vpravy</em>)</td>
<td>To provide learners with examples of the various possibilities for use of these language items in short speech acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>speech exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>movlenniiev vpravy</em>)</td>
<td>To develop the four macro skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>non-communicative exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>nekomunikatyvni vpravy</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>semi-communicative exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>umovno-komunikatyvni vpravy</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>communicative exercises</strong> (Ukr. <em>komunikatyvni vpravy</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that language and speech exercises are used to ensure “sufficient level of skills and habits formation through the use of intensive drills” (MOES, 2013a, p. 3), these are essentially forms-focused (see Literature Review Section 3.2.3). However, there is no discussion in any of the documents collected about ‘focus on form’ and the relation of this to meaning-making – both aspects that are integral to tasks, and often inherent in the communicative approach. Further, no distinction is made between these aspects and an explicit focus on formS (Long, 1996), which is characteristic of exercises and drills.

In addition to these three main types of learning activities, the *Educational Program for Primary School* (MOES, 2012b, p. 6) also mentions ‘communicative tasks’ (Ukr. *komunikatyvni zavdannia*) that are used to foster “creative skills development, student independence, and develop readiness to communication as a result of
complex use of language skills, speech skills, and learning experience (general learning skills).” Another MOES policy refers to the use of komunikatyvnі zavdannya as a form of end of the year assessment (MOES, 2012a). According to this document, these zavdannya allow students to “demonstrate their knowledge and skills” (p. 7).

The teacher training textbook (Nikolaieva, 2013) provides a few examples of such assessment ‘tasks’, including listening to information about bus routes in order to choose the correct bus for an intended destination, filling in an application form with personal details, and writing a response to a friend’s letter with information about the weather and sightseeing for their intended visit in summer. These are used alongside other test activities that focus on vocabulary and grammar development. However, although the term task (Ukr. zavdannya) is used in these policies and is associated with real-life communication, there is no theoretical background provided to distinguish between these and exercises (Ukr. vprava).

This lack of explanation and examples is further exacerbated by some contradictory statements provided in the documents as both words (i.e., zavdannya and vprava) are often used interchangeably. In one of the very few instances when tasks are explicitly mentioned, the policy says: “All exercises and tasks have to be communicatively oriented…” (MOES, 2013a, p. 7). Further, while the Educational Program for Secondary School (MOES, 2013b, p. 8) requires that “teaching vocabulary and grammar [should be] based on the principle of learning language units through communicative tasks (here, zavdannya) before analysis and further use of this material in practice,” it then says that “In line with the communicative approach, new language (vocabulary and grammar) is first introduced in the context, and only then is used in oral and written communication with the help of relevant exercises (vpravy) and tasks (zavdannya).” It is not clear, therefore, whether tasks are the activities used to present the new language material in context, or those used to practise them along with exercises after the presentation.

In the document Inozemni Movy (MOES, 2012a), pre- and post-reading (text comprehension) activities are referred to as tasks:

Before students start reading sentences under the pictures, riddles, poems and short stories, they will have to do simple communicative tasks: answer
teachers’ questions, say 1-2 sentences about the characters, describe their appearance, make a guess about their occupation and so on. Communicative tasks after the reading of the text require students to provide extended answers to the questions, and create utterances based on the prompts (key words, pictures). (pp. 7-8)

While there are tasks that include pre- and post-reading activities, not every comprehension activity is a task in the way that tasks are conceptualized in the TBLT literature (see Literature Review Section 3.2.3), especially when they focus on the use of particular vocabulary or grammar items and are presented using teacher-centred approaches (e.g., when the teacher is the one who asks the questions).

As these policies provide only brief description of the teaching tools used in Ukrainian FLT, the teacher education textbook (Nikolaieva, 2013) was consulted for further explanation. A footnote was found in this textbook explaining that zavdannia can also mean an activity used in “language teaching pedagogies abroad” where it is distinct from vpravy and is focused on meaning rather than on form (p. 182). Similarly, the policy maker confirmed that ‘tasks’ as defined in the CEFR are not currently employed in local FLT. She explained that Chapter 7 of the CEFR that is devoted to tasks is encapsulated in the national FLT syllabus through “the communicative orientation of learning activities” and “exercises that use the language in practical ways.”

Given that teacher education textbook and official policies do not utilize TBLT tasks, it was not surprising that the participants in this study did not mention them in their responses. When asked about tasks in the interviews, they either spoke about exercises or asked the researcher for clarification and explanation. According to the policy maker, the word zavdannia is currently used to mean “instruction,” or in other words, explanation of what students should do in an exercise, or as a home task (Ukr. domashnie zavdannia). One teacher had a similar understanding: “An exercise is when [students] write something, while a task is when you explain what they need to do.” Further, in the interviews the teachers referred to the same activities as both “tasks” and “exercises,” saying for instance that the presented task was indeed a very good exercise. One of the teacher educators explained it this way:
It has always been hard to distinguish [between task and exercises] and now there is no unanimous position among teacher educators about what an exercise and a communicative task is … in English there are [two separate notions] a task and an exercise, while we say that a task is a part of the exercise.

Clearly, therefore, there is a difference between how the term “task” (zavdannia) is used in the local Ukrainian FLT teaching and how it is applied within the wider international context. The following section provides an analysis of teacher feedback to the presentation used to introduce teachers to TBLT and its conceptualization of “task.”

7.3. Teacher feedback on the TBLT presentation

The presentation utilized in Phase 2 included an overview of the key aspects of TBLT, such as its theoretical and empirical basis, as well as examples of tasks and a task cycle. The presentation was also informed by Phase 1 findings, such as the necessity to introduce teachers to the difference between analytic and synthetic syllabuses, to discuss forms of interaction that are inherent to TBLT, and to emphasize how it compares to traditional teaching approaches. Throughout the presentation, the researcher asked questions to prompt interaction with the audience, to trigger their thinking and to help teachers formulate their feedback (e.g., asking them whether an example activity is a task or not, or whether they had similar experiences in their practice). The participants were also shown two to three short videos (as described in Method Chapter, Section 4.6.3) featuring school-age students working on language tasks in the following contexts: England (ESL), Spain (EFL), and Australia (ESL). See Appendix 4 for a detailed outline of the presentation.

The following provides an account of the aspects of tasks that were mentioned and discussed by the participants, as well as those included in the presentation, but not mentioned by the teachers. The comments made during the focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as those made during the presentation were included in the analysis. In order to show the extent to which each group and individual teacher contributed to
the discussion, the respondents were assigned a number. Teachers from the focus
groups were labelled as F(+ number of the group) T(+ number of the teacher) and the
numbers were assigned according to the sequence of the interviews and participation.
For example, F3T1 was the teacher who started the discussion in the third focus
group interview. The teacher who provided her feedback in an individual interview
(see Method Chapter Section 4.6.2) is referred to as IT1.

7.3.1. **Student needs**

In their feedback, teachers discussed the ability of tasks to target the needs of their
students. They mentioned the aspects that make tasks potentially suitable for their
particular students, as well as difficulties that may arise. These comments were
related to the students’ age, levels of proficiency, and personality types.

**Benefits**

There seemed to be a general agreement among the teachers that TBLT tasks may be
appropriate for school-aged students. They noted that the tasks they observed in the
presentation connect well with the interests of their learners. For example, this
position is illustrated in an excerpt from FGD3:

F3T10: I liked the idea … when students give advice to each other. I think
that students of any age have their problems, children have their small
troubles and teenagers have more adult-like troubles…
F3T6: I would like to mention the tasks when students work in groups with
the coat,\textsuperscript{12} because I have noticed that many children like investigations. Now
in my year eight [class] we have a theme called ‘Detective stories’ and many
children want to become a detective, to investigate something, so that would
be interesting for them.
F3T1: …it would be interesting for younger kids as well I reckon…
F3T6: …yes, I think it would be an effective task.

---

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix 4 for the *Things in the pocket* task.
Later in this discussion, F3T8 pointed out that the tasks resembled games, which are generally considered to be appropriate for primary school students. She said she considered them effective because junior students “are little kids and they want to play, and this is the way they learn a FL,” which in turn is “in line with the principles of FLT.”

**Challenges**

While being positive about the general suitability of tasks for their students, the teachers in Phase 2 also expressed their concerns about the ability of tasks to cater for the variety of students in their classrooms.

To start with, some teachers pointed out that each classroom has students of very different levels of language proficiency. For instance, F2T1 said that there can be a student in the classroom who can hardly speak and write in their own language, and they might be sitting next to a student who needs advanced skill options because they participate in the academic FL competitions (olympiads) among schools and even at the national/international levels. F2T1 further explained that having multiple levels of proficiency in the classroom is particularly problematic because students are carefully monitored and teachers are expected to have all their students meet the curriculum requirements. This means that when choosing activities for the lesson, these teachers are conditioned to drill weaker students in the language needed for assessment.

In addition to different proficiency levels, the teachers mentioned that their students have different personality types which could potentially have an impact on their ability to perform tasks. For instance, F2T3 said: “So two or three people would be working and actively communicating with each other, and others [not].” It was suggested that some students might have no desire to take an active part in the lesson. IT1 asked: “How can all students be involved? What about those who just don’t want to do anything?” F3T5 had similar ideas about the way tasks could work with her students: “if a child is more sociable, they will ask questions, but someone may be not.”
Some teachers suggested that for students like this, there was a need to provide extra motivation. This idea was elaborated in FGD3:

F3T3: … they become emotional and stubborn and say I won’t do it.
F3T5: Yes.
F3T8: There has to be a special motivation for the speaking activity during the lesson.
F3T10: And it depends to a large extent on a teacher.
F3T3: You need to encourage [students].
F3T7: There has to be an interesting topic and a good motivation.

In addition to this, while teachers suggested that tasks might be suitable for the schoolchildren, they tended to restrict the use of tasks to only one age group. For instance, F3T6 intimated that tasks can be effective only for younger students as their older peers might not find them interesting. She said: “It seems to me that it is better to use this method in primary school. I think it won’t be relevant for the high school students to work on such activities as describing an apple.” Some other participants even suggested that tasks are suitable only as a kindergarten activity. For them, tasks seemed to be not serious enough for a school activity. F3T9 said: “In our kindergartens in the senior age group, they learn English in a similar way [to what was presented]. Children play there and learn something, but for school this is [not appropriate].” F3T7 added: “In school we need them to be able to display their knowledge in writing.”

In contrast to these participants, IT1 believed that low-proficient students would not be successful at tasks: “I tried [some of the given tasks] in my lessons and my students’ proficiency is not high enough for it.” She then added: “This is a matter of practice. I think this method is effective but at a certain level of proficiency.”

Likewise, teachers in the second focus group believed tasks can be effective only with highly proficient and well-disciplined students. They elaborated:

F2T2: It depends on the students. If the group is well behaved, they choose the topic for discussion and then do free speaking, and communicate. However, it depends on whether the group consists of strong students and whether they are disciplined.
F2T1: Well-disciplined.
F2T2: But if you give them a topic and they start going “mmmmm,” “er,” they will upset the lesson.
F2T1: This activity type [i.e., tasks] is effective with the strong [proficient] groups and where students have a copious vocabulary… Otherwise, I don’t think we would have the same picture [as on the video].

Therefore, it seems that, while the participants believed that tasks can meet some of the age-related needs of their students, they suggested the use of tasks should be restricted to either only active, younger, or more proficient learners.

7.3.2. Language

Much of the feedback received from the teachers in the FGDs was related to the use of language. The teacher participants frequently commented on the language used by the students during task performance. In particular, they noticed that students were not required to use language accurately to express themselves. F3T1 articulated it this way: “There seems to be mutual understanding here. Even though they might not speak perfect English and use some gestures, they still understand each other.” As in the case with student needs, both benefits and challenges were perceived by the teachers in relation to language use in tasks.

Benefits

One of the key advantages of tasks mentioned by the teachers was their contribution to the development of communicative skills. For example, F3T4 said: “I think these are very good activities … very good for the communicative skills development.” F3T2 described how students did not seem afraid to speak, “to express themselves” when talking to their peers. F3T1 described how he could use one of the tasks from the video and adjust the content in a way that would make his students communicate.

Another language-related benefit of using tasks identified by some of the teachers was that they seem to support students’ ability to think in English. For instance, F3T1 noted that student cooperation evident in the video appeared to stimulate the
students’ thinking and helped them use language more naturally: “They both think… When they communicate, their logical thinking works and they can express themselves in the FL.” As F3T8 explained further:

What is interesting is that in these video fragments children are taught to think in English. My university lecturer used to say that if you have taught children to think in English, this is the top achievement of your work and the peak of their success.

The facilitation of thinking, in turn, was associated with problem-solving and revision, considered highly important for effective FL learning in Ukrainian FLT (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3.5 and Chapter 6 Sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.2.). For example, F3T10 said she liked tasks because “it is teaching through problem-solving.” This teacher believed that “when they have a problem that they need to solve via communication – that is great.” At the same time, F3T9 indicated that tasks might “provide an opportunity for students to use what they learned a long time ago, to revise this material.”

In addition, without explicitly naming it, F2T1 mentioned the potential of tasks to help students learn from their peers through communication. He said: “It is effective firstly because it develops vocabulary and students exchange their knowledge in some way.” At the same time, for F3T5 tasks appeared useful as they allow more space for students to acquire language at their own pace:

Researcher: What do you think about changing the PPP sequence?
F3T5: Well this idea is not bad, by the way, when first children do it, and then you point at mistakes if any or maybe they even won’t make mistakes… Children acquire certain vocabulary at different levels, someone more someone less, the same about grammar structures… So, I like this idea. I think I can try it with my year three students, it deserves attention.

Here, it seems that the ideas of students learning from each other and acquiring language at a different pace may have been triggered by the TBLT presentation and videos. Given the Ukrainian syllabus is currently synthetic, requiring all students to learn particular language items at the same time, and classroom practices are mainly
teacher-centred, these comments suggest that some teachers are receptive to alternative pedagogical practices.

**Challenges**

Turning to the possible challenges, the teachers from non-specialised schools suggested such an approach to language learning may be a challenge for their students. They felt that within the time allocated for FLT at their school, it would be difficult for their students to even learn separate items of language one by one, let alone all of them combined. These teachers argued that a single focus would be better for their students:

F1T3: [The students] can hardly learn [to use phonetic] transcription.
F1T1: It is easy for students to learn words related to the topic. If you ask them about animals, or something that is interesting, they will tell you.
F1T2: There is a lot of grammar material which is introduced in a chaotic manner in the textbooks… what we need is a clear structure to drill.
F1T1: We drill structures “This is. That is.” Children learn if you drill them.

Likewise, IT1, a teacher from the village school, said that drills should be central to teaching, while tasks should be used as additional activities. She said: “It is useful if students make an effort and work hard, but I think you cannot avoid explanation, drills and exercises. At the end of the day, students should reach the level when they understand and recognize [language] as well as use if not perfect then at least correct language in most cases.” F3T5 expressed a similar opinion that tasks should be used in combination with other methods as “one of the forms of teaching,” rather than replace the existing approach altogether.

In addition to this, some participants expressed the view that tasks should only be used at certain times during the lesson, which did not include “serious” learning. To give an example, the following excerpt illustrates how tasks were deemed to be an effective start to the lesson or a break between more “serious” activities:
F3T7: But it is very good for the beginning [of the lesson] as children will relax and know that nobody controls them, nobody demands anything, they will not get a bad mark or something, they just speak in a FL freely.

F3T4: Something that is really motivating can be used at every lesson if it matches the topic and other lesson parts, but it shouldn’t take much time.

F3T1: Around ten minutes could be used [for tasks], and it will also make the lesson more interesting for the students. For instance, you can use it in the middle of the lesson in form of games, as an entertainment, so that they can relax, and then go back to the battle so to say.

By contrast, F3T10 believed that tasks are more complex and so should be given to students “when they have finished the topic.” She said tasks “can be used as the conclusion,” because “otherwise… you won’t get any result, it will be a waste of time.” In other words, this teacher perceived tasks as suitable for the last stage of the PPP cycle, when students are allowed an attempt to make use of the language they have just learned and practice it in a more independent way.

Another possible challenge to the use of tasks is the language environment in which the teachers work. For instance, F3T8 described how tasks might be especially successful when used with immigrants: “For the children who come to a foreign country and don’t know the language, I think tasks are effective and every teacher who is going to teach them has to know [this method].” Other teachers also clearly distinguished the way the language is taught when it is a SL compared to a FLT context. For some it seemed impossible to use tasks with the same success outside the target language environment. For example, F3T4 commented on the video: “But the problem is that those students are in England, right?” The teachers in the first focus group also mentioned this difference:

F1T1: The conditions are uneven, we have Russian [language environment] and students on the video are in the [target] language environment.

F1T3: There are different conditions in terms of language input. There is nowhere else for our students to communicate other than with a book and a teacher.

F1T1: We cannot have the same communication as on the video.
This condition was related to another challenge, that of the overuse of L1 by the students. The teachers claimed that if left uncontrolled, students in a Ukrainian classroom will quickly shift to their L1 when communicating with their Ukrainian peers. For instance, F3T6 said:

I think there is a certain difficulty in the use of these methods as children are in groups and the teacher cannot control every group simultaneously. I worked with my year sixes in groups the other day, and once you move way they start speaking Ukrainian straight away and ‘who needs English?’ Therefore, you need to stay near and [make sure] they ‘forget’ Ukrainian during the lesson.

F3T4 agreed: “Our students, if they are not controlled, they will speak Ukrainian among themselves.”

It was suggested that this issue can be tackled by tightening control. F3T1, for example, explained: “As a teacher, you need to exert control as our students are cheeky. However, if we control them, then I think it would be very useful to try this method.” As a way the teacher can stay in control, F3T2 suggested doing a task with the whole group of students instead of having them work in pairs. While she then admitted that: “It won’t be a conversation in English, but having one [student] use English, and others draw,” her comment signifies that the teacher was aware of the centrality of interaction to tasks, which was another example of an insight triggered by the presentation (as currently student interaction is not well represented in Ukrainian FLT – see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.4).

Aspects that were omitted in teachers’ feedback

It was apparent from the Phase 2 data that some key TBLT aspects were omitted in the teachers’ feedback to the presentation. In particular, focus on form and a non-PPP teaching sequence were absent in the participants’ comments, unless explicitly referred to by the researcher.

First, teachers in this study seemed to associate tasks with “communicativeness” and “student involvement” rather than a focus on form. As a result, when teachers were
given a “tricky question” whether the following instruction would be a task: “Use the question form ‘Did you ever …’ to ask your partner about their childhood” (taken from Willis, 1998, p. 3), they responded positively. They explained this is because “the students were given a task” (what to do) and “had to work on it” (it required action on the part of the students). Only one teacher in FGD3 said the provided example was not a task, but had difficulty explaining why. Later, when the presentation was finished, teachers did not mention this issue themselves. This omission may be attributed to the lack of knowledge about form, forms and meaning (see Sections 5.3.5 and 7.2), which can potentially inhibit the successful implementation of tasks in this context.

Another aspect ignored by all the teachers in their comments, unless their attention was drawn to it by the researcher, was the difference between TBLT and the PPP model. Although this aspect was covered in the presentation, it did not appear to stand out to the teachers. Even when one of the participants mentioned the “car metaphor” provided in the presentation (see Appendix 4), she pointed at the excellent use of the visuals in tasks, but ignored the analytic approach illustrated by this example.

7.3.3. Teacher and student roles

In the focus groups, the participants commented about the roles of teachers and students when performing tasks. Again, these were connected to both benefits and challenges for FLT in Ukraine. 

Benefits

First, the participants commented on the teachers’ actions during task performance in the examples provided in the presentation. The excerpt from the focus group discussion below illustrates how the Ukrainian practitioners noted the differences from the usual teacher-centred lesson and appeared to contemplate ways in which teacher’s control can be exercised in a different way:

F3T3: Student is in the centre of attention and the teacher corrects them.
F3T1: So to say, the teacher is relegated to the background
F3T3: …and controls.
F3T1: She does control, but looking at the behaviour in the classroom we can say that the teacher is in the background.

The Ukrainian practitioners noted this as having a positive impact on students’ performance. One of its advantages, according to these teachers, was that students were not afraid of speaking. In their own practices, they observed that “students give up when challenged, they don’t want to work.” F3T6 said that her students “have knowledge but they… are either afraid in front of me, are afraid of speaking, or they don’t want to.” By contrast, F3T2 noticed that in the videos provided in the presentation, “the teacher does not control, and the students are not afraid to express themselves as they realise that their classmate does not know whether their language is correct or not. They think, I speak and he or she understands me.” Hence, the teachers seemed to suggest that changing the teacher’s role and making it less central decreases the pressure on students, which in turn encourages them to have a go.

In turn this confidence to use the language was seen to boost student motivation. For instance, F3T3 said that by eliminating fear and by getting students to actually use the language tasks, teachers help them “understand that it is possible to learn the language.” Similarly, F3T9 said that “children will see that they can already say something, can use the language to communicate,” which will make learning “more interesting” and provide a “stimulus to keep working and keep developing [oneself].”

Further, F3T3 suggested that a change from the usual classroom routine can be motivational. She said that students might get bored with the activities they “are used to,” while “when there is something new, then children are attracted to it, and of course they want to try it,” so if she tried tasks with her students, she believed that “of course it would be interesting for them.” According to F3T4, tasks may be beneficial especially when new material is presented, because “the new information would not look dry, and this will motivate the students, so I think we could use [this approach].”
Finally, the participants also noted that tasks can motivate students and teachers to go beyond their usual practices. IT1 explained how tasks appeared able to encourage students to become initiators of actions, which in turn helped sustain their attention and participation. She said that “if students don’t know something then they have to ask, which draws their attention and keeps them interested, because if I asked, I would listen [to the answer].” Regarding teachers, F3T3 suggested tasks can motivate them to go beyond the use of the textbook. She said that tasks can motivate the teacher: “to create a situation … that is interesting [for students], that it is not the topic from the textbook, but to find something additional.”

The above comments were significant in two ways. Firstly, the ability to motivate students is seen as a key role for teachers in Ukraine (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.4), and hence tasks were deemed potentially valuable for these teachers. For instance, F3T4 said: “Of course I would try it if it can motivate students to keep working. If they can make students interested, then these activities will be very useful…”

Secondly, having students generate questions is an unusual practice in Ukrainian FLT (see Chapter 6 Sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.2).

Challenges

As previously indicated, student and teacher behaviour in the videos seemed to be unusual for the Ukrainian teachers. Along with the benefits that this arrangement of the teaching process could provide, the participants described a number of potential challenges associated with classroom management and overall lesson productivity. For example, while watching the videos of students performing tasks, IT1 mentioned that it was too noisy in the classroom. She indicated that teachers might need special training to organize their lessons in this way. She said: “This is a matter of practice. I think this method is effective but a teacher needs to be trained to organize these [tasks].”

Further, a different way of activity arrangement led teachers to think that the task activities were used for entertainment rather than serious learning. Indeed, students on the video looked relaxed, they were laughing occasionally and working without
the teacher’s continuous control. For the teachers, it appeared that the students had sole responsibility for choosing the activities they did and, therefore, they chose those they liked most instead of something that would be more challenging. After the presentation, F3T7 commented: “So as I understand it, everyone does an activity they like most, meaning they have a right to choose what to do.” The teachers in FGD1 noted that the teacher was “so calm,” and the students were seemingly “having fun.” As a result, the participants concluded that a lot of lesson time was wasted. For instance, F1T1 said: “We could have done so much in the same time period!”

7.3.4. Resources

The teachers participating in Phase 2 of the study also mentioned the use of resources in tasks. In fact, in all three focus groups, the first comments following the presentation were related to the pros and cons of the use of visuals. Although it is not a key requirement in TBLT, a few different types of visual aids were used in the videos that were shown to the participants. These included a student-created project about the local birds in the environment represented on large sheets of papers; picture cut-outs of small individual items and a larger picture of the setting on which to physically locate them; and a black outline drawing – which was in the hands of one student sitting behind a dividing screen and whose partner sat on the other side ready to draw the picture following their partner’s instruction.

Benefits

The teachers outlined a number of benefits surrounding the use of visual aids. Firstly, they mentioned the high quality of the materials used. For example, F2T1 said: “It all looks like an interesting system, the visual aids look marvellous.” She was clearly impressed as she kept referring to the visual resources throughout the group interview: “It was very interesting when children were placing the pictures… It is very interesting… The visual aids look amazing.” Similarly, F3T1 attributed the success of the method to the visual aspect of the resources: “I think it is effective because students there are looking at the visual aid.”
The participants seemed to perceive visuals as an important source of pedagogical input. To explain why she thought a visual resource was useful, F2T1 said: “[the visual aid in this example] has educational value, every picture educates because the students can learn something new… There are pictures with such an interesting content here.” Then she compared it to her own experiences: “I just think that [this method] is rather different, as we work more with writing activities, and here there are pictures with such interesting content.” F3T6 pointed out that “a description of the visual, a picture … is always a good activity [for learning a language].” Indeed, lesson observations in Phase 1 of the study included a few examples of students describing to the teacher what they can see in the picture. It should be noted, however, that these observed activities did not include an information gap (as per Ellis, 2009a) – all participants in the lesson could see the same picture, and they had to make up sentences to describe it.

For the participants, visuals also seemed to have a motivational value. F3T6, for instance, said that in her opinion, “visuals are effective and motivate children,” and help the lesson “go well.” The participants also mentioned that the use of such resources provides students with an opportunity to produce something meaningful and then use these materials for further learning. For instance, F3T2 mentioned the tasks where children were given instructions to follow step by step. She said it was interesting because “children can do something with their hands, conduct an experiment, some activities when they read and have to understand it and reproduce it [in a way] that it works.” She concluded that this type of work “motivates them and is interesting, they will participate in it and do it.” At the same time her colleague, F3T7, noticed the use of student produced materials in some of the examples of tasks:

When students do projects, they can make not only a presentation but draw or make something that can be used later as a decoration. Hence, children can see that it was not hidden and nobody needs it, but here it is hanging and I have made it and I want to do more. This will motivate them to keep working.
These observations clearly contrasted to the participants’ own teaching and learning context where student work was found to be rarely displayed and never used again (Chapter 6 Section 6.3.4).

**Challenges**

Speaking about the positive contribution of the visuals, the participants also expressed their concerns about the availability of the resources used in the videos. For instance, teachers in FGD1 noted that, unfortunately, they did not have such “great” resources. In particular, F1T1 said: “We do not have the visual aids and other possibilities as there are on the video.” F3T4 said that teachers would need “a great imagination, it is not easy to create such tasks.” Here is how the participants in the second focus group described it:

F2T1: It was a very interesting activity when children worked with the laid on pictures…but you need to have it…

F2T2: It is an enormous amount of work to prepare this.

F2T1: No they must have [the resources] in the shops there.

F2T1: They have this material and methodology, while we don’t have anything like that.

F2T3: You need to either pay your own money or draw it yourself.

In addition to this, F1T1 mentioned that teachers in such countries like Great Britain, Australia and Spain where the videos were made “have a teacher assistant,” which means that the teacher does not have to prepare everything themselves. In contrast, Ukrainian teachers have no assistance available and so this could significantly increase their teaching workload as well as cut time for other duties. The third focus group participants discussed it this way:

F3T4: One should be creative to make such tasks really, to collect a great number of such student-produced works to then choose those that are appropriate and that students would like. It is not easy really.

F3T6: It takes a lot of time and attention.
It also appeared that even if teachers had access to the materials they need, it would be difficult to adjust the existing facilities to use these resources properly. Teachers seemed to be discouraged by the limited possibilities of their classrooms. For instance, the participants of the second focus group commented:

F2T2: An unusual classroom.
F2T1: We have a system of the three rows of desks and it is different [from the one on the video] as you can see. We are not able to do this yet, we could make a circle but it is all we can do.
F2T2: … but another group of students will come after to study a different subject, and we will have to put [the desks] back [in order].

IT1 also commented on the limits to the teacher’s ability to adjust the existing facilities. In particular, she said that they are restricted in the amount of material they can use and put on the walls. For instance, Ukrainian teachers are prohibited from hanging many pictures on the walls as these are deemed to distract students’ attention. Further, although no digital or other technology was used in the classroom episodes shown during the presentation, teachers mentioned they would be restricted in task use because they lack technological resources in their schools.

Another resource that seemed to be lacking in teachers’ point of view was time available in the lesson. For example, IT1 believed that Ukrainian teachers cannot afford the time to use this type of activity within a lesson as it would be too long (due to a standard time duration, see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1). F3T2 said: “To organize these activities and then assess them… It is very difficult to do everything in one lesson. It would be difficult for us to apply this.” F3T7 added: “Of course this cannot be done within one lesson. They had some preparation time there [on the video]. They had been gathering this information for some time.” This lack of time was not only at the level of an individual lesson, but also within the framework of the whole curriculum. F2T1 explained: “We have pressure due to some deadlines, tests, and the curriculum.”

Therefore, while the teachers seemed to be very positive about the use of visuals, objects and technology in the classroom, this was balanced against a number of
challenges. If these challenges can be adequately addressed, there is a greater likelihood of teachers being motivated to implement the innovation.

7.3.5. Task-like activities

When commenting on the task examples provided in the presentation, some practitioners described activities in their own practice that they perceived to be similar to tasks. In particular, they mentioned projects, warm-up activities at the beginning of the lesson, and some creative whole-class activities.

Project work is currently popular among professionals in the field (see Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2), and some of the focus group participants perceived this to be similar to tasks. The following illustrates one example of such an activity as described by the teachers:

F3T7: We mentioned instructions (see Appendix 4 for ‘A hole in your hand’ task where students are required to follow the instructions). Basically, we use them, we have project work when students receive a task to do.

F3T5: …They read an instruction.

F3T7: They have a task to make flowers or something else and they can only make it if they read the sequence of actions and what and how to do it.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that while projects are undoubtedly very similar to tasks, in Ukrainian FLT they are used as a creative activity after the topic has been studied, and students do them mainly at home as homework (See Chapter 6).

In contrast to the “end-of-the-topic” activity, F3T7 provided an example of “communication warm-up” she did at the beginning of the lesson, as described below:

This is something like the word associations game, when you name the topic and ask what students associate with it, and you first have children speak in pairs for two-three minutes, they express their opinion and then they can compare ideas. They can tell their associations to the rest of the class, or go to the blackboard and write their associations, and then they can make a story
using these words. Following this, the teacher may say, ‘you can also learn these other new words’, and then introduce new vocabulary, so that to move to it logically.

While the activity described by this teacher might resemble the task cycle, its primary focus is on language forms rather than meaning, as there is no reason for students to make up a story using the words. There is also no outcome other than the introduction of the new vocabulary. This is another example of the lack of awareness about meaning and form (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3.5) that leads to the development of misconceptions about the nature of a task.

Some teachers indicated that it might be better to do tasks in the context of working with the whole class rather than in pair or group work. In fact, they believed they were already doing it. F3T2 explained: “We do … the whole-class collective work, not in pairs because there will be a mess.” The participants of the first focus group said that, similar to the task where students draw a picture based on their partner’s description, they used an activity when children draw according to what the teacher says. F3T2 described the same type of activity from her own experience:

We do it in a bit different way. For example, in year two we are studying body parts. A student gets a picture, comes to the blackboard and describes it, while others are drawing. Then they show their pictures… This is a collective work.

Having described the activity, this teacher pointed out the limitation of such whole-class arrangement. She admitted that it was “not a conversation in English.” Unlike previous examples proffered by the teachers, this suggestion does have a gap that requires a student to use the FL (others do not see the picture that they have to draw), and the rest of the class does get a chance to ask this student questions and clarify meanings. However, as this activity was not observed, it is not clear whether these students are given the language they have to use in their descriptions or refer to their own language resources as per Ellis (2009a).

Finally, some teachers believed they do tasks simply because they provide authentic instructions or use realia in their lessons. For example, F3T8 said that when teaching
students to write letters, she can refer to the real situation in her school, “come and bring along an envelope and say, this is our friend Anya, she went to study in America. Let’s read [a letter from her] and write a response.” F3T6 said: “With my year sixes we had a topic about a matrioshka doll and one of the students brought one to class. We were studying its appearance and using active vocabulary.” In this example, again, the teacher retained the focus on language forms rather than meaning – a position contrary to that of TBLT.

While each of these examples provided by the teachers had limitation and most of them were never observed, suggesting they are still an exception rather than a norm, they did resemble some of the features of a task, and therefore can be utilized as building blocks towards the TBLT-informed change.

7.4. Chapter summary

Within the policy documents tasks were not clearly identified nor indicated to be distinct from other learning activities. This was also reflected in the responses of the participants. On this basis, to involve teachers in a dialogue about the appropriateness of tasks it was necessary to introduce key aspects of TBLT in a presentation.

The feedback provided by the practitioners during and after the presentation included discussion about student needs, the use of language, teacher and student behaviour in the classroom, and resources and facilities. However, it was also apparent that teachers focused more on the representation of tasks, such as visual aids, rather than on genuine communication or how TBLT contrasts to the PPP cycle. The teachers did identify aspects that might benefit them and their students as well as challenges that can potentially undermine the feasibility of using tasks. The perceived benefits include relevance to the students’ interests, the development of communicative skills, increased motivation and student participation, and educational value of the

13 Matryoshka doll is a traditional Russian and Ukrainian souvenir made of wood, a set of dolls each with a smaller one inside.
resources used in tasks. The perceived challenges of tasks implementation were of three main types. Firstly, there were issues related to the language environment and language use; secondly, issues surrounding student characteristics; and thirdly, issues related to the teacher and wider educational system, such as lack of skills, time and resources.

In addition, some comments suggested that participants may have developed misconceptions about TBLT and tasks during the presentation. These were related to the definition of tasks, choice of tasks, and a number of characteristics determining the effective use of tasks. These beliefs may stem from the circumstances surrounding the presentation, such as small amount of information that could be provided within a reasonable time frame, and Ukrainian teachers’ lack of background in and practical experience with current FLT approaches. Even so, the presentation did appear to draw teachers’ attention to some ideas beyond the current professional discourse, including students generating questions and learning from their peers, the achievement of the non-linguistic outcomes (for example, following an instruction in order to make something), and materials recycling.

Finally, there was a difference between the teacher responses to TBLT according to whether they came from general or specialised schools. While those in the latter appeared more enthusiastic, those from the former seemed more reserved in their comments and expressed more concerns.
Chapter 8: Case studies

8.1. Overview

This chapter presents three case studies, each reporting on one teacher’s classroom practices. Based on Phase 3 of the data collection, the descriptions of these three micro contexts further illustrate the aspects of current FLT in Ukraine, including existing task-like practices as identified by the researcher or as suggested by the participants in the previous phases. In this way, the chapter further elaborates how TBLT can potentially build upon these practices as a locally appropriate and ecological innovation (Tudor, 2003; Wedell, 2009).

The framework for case selection is provided in Method Chapter Section 4.7.1. The first case study describes a teacher whose practices combine both task-like and non-task-like features. Next, a teacher whose practices appeared to show the closest alignment with TBLT is presented. The third case study describes a teacher whose practices were the least task-like. In addition, these cases represent different school types and locations to provide data on a variety of local practices. Although their practices differ significantly, all three teachers expressed interest in innovation, largely due to their love of teaching and their personal openness to change. For confidentiality purposes, the real names of the teachers have been substituted with pseudonyms.

Each case study begins with a general description of the school in which it was situated, the teacher and the students. This is followed by a description of the FLT environment including a report of the classroom facilities and teaching materials used by this teacher. Next, teachers’ practices are described and illustrations from the observed lessons are provided. In addition, the teacher’s perceptions about innovation in FLT are explored and the main challenges identified by the teachers in relation to their practices are presented. Each case description is followed by a further analysis and a summary where the connection to the previous data and the foundation (or the lack of it) for TBLT in that particular micro context are discussed.
8.2. Teacher 1

8.2.1. The teacher and the school

Oksana Valerivna is a teacher aged in her early 30s, and at the time of the study she had begun her eleventh year teaching. Her parents both came from working class backgrounds, and there are no teachers in her extended family. It was not language as such but rather a calling to teach that motivated her to choose the profession. “I was born on Teacher’s Day,” she said, “This must have been a calling that got stuck somewhere in my head. And of course, I love children to bits. I love sharing emotions, opinions, especially when they come to me during the break and tell me how they are going, when they meet me, give hugs. It is very rewarding.”

Oksana went to a Teacher Training College, and while on teaching placement, she realized how much she loved teaching. Once she had an opportunity to try a different work experience, temporarily replacing her friend at a firm where the position required English language skills. Although this is an appealing alternative for many young teacher professionals in Ukraine, the possibility of staying in the office did not impress her. She said she found it was much more interesting at school where the time flies quickly and “you can sow seeds and see them grow.” “The students come to you as a blank page,” she said quoting a famous Ukrainian educator of the twentieth century Vasyl Sukhomlynskyi, “and graduate as buckets full of knowledge.” Oksana continued her tertiary education in the main Pedagogical University in Ukraine, where she combined studies with work at a school. The first school she worked at was not specialized, and there were many students in each class. However, she found she liked checking their copybooks and dictations. She tried to find extra material, photocopied from different books, and noticed her students were coming to the lesson excited and motivated to learn.

However, she soon changed schools and this case study was conducted where she now works – at a specialized school located in a highly populated urban area near the city center. In order to be accepted into this school, students have to go through a written examination prepared by the teachers who work there. According to the Head
of the Language Department in this school, the requirements nowadays are much less
demanding than a few years ago when only the best students could enter this school.
Despite this, the standards appeared to be high and there were students in the
observed lessons who used to live and study abroad, and who spoke English with a
near-native accent. Oksana described her students as motivated and planning to
pursue language-related careers.

Apart from FL teaching, Oksana also was a mentor or form class teacher which
meant she had a group of students to look after. This responsibility included tackling
various academic and personal issues that might arise during the day or in the course
of her students’ study, working with other subject teachers to ensure her students are
performing at their best, conducting “character education lessons” after class to
address any current problems as well as general topics such as “being polite” or
“danger on the road,” and other duties as required. Very often during the observation
period her students came in during the break to ask for some information or for her
assistance. One of the field note entries provides a glimpse about how busy the day
was for this teacher:

_The teacher looked snowed under with work today. There was a variety of ages,
starting with the little ones in the morning, then year fives, then little ones again,
followed by year five, year seven, year five again and then year eleven at the end. In
addition, there were more students than usual (there was one lesson where another
group joined us as their teacher did not turn up) and a preparation for a national
holiday. It was warmer inside today as the heating was fully on. The teacher opened
the widow during each break to let some fresh air in. In one of the lessons with the
younger students, the school nurse entered the classroom and checked students for
there was a case of scabies detected and an epidemic was to be avoided. We were all
told to wash our hands all the time, but there was no soap in the bathroom.
Fortunately I had my hand sanitizing gel, which came in handy. Apart from all these
distractions, the teacher also had to organize a celebration for the ‘Day of the
Ukrainian Soldier’ for her students. One of the student’s mums came with cakes
during the lesson, which were immediately organized to be picked up by some of her_
8.2.2. **The classroom**

Oksana was one of the few teachers in her school who had their own classroom for language teaching. It was a small-sized classroom that accommodated groups of six to eighteen students. There were photos and pictures of the famous British landmarks on the walls. There were also a lot of plants in pots around the room, and a small CD player located next to the blackboard. However, there was one disadvantage, as described in the field notes:

*The FL classroom is small in size and it is a joint room and another small group of students is sitting just behind the door with very poor soundproofing. The teacher in the joint classroom raises her voice a lot and that can be heard quite often from where I am sitting at the rear desk. Also, the door does not lock properly and opens a few times during each lesson.*

7 October 2015

It seemed that any more movement or a higher noise level in this classroom would be very disruptive. Such an observation helps explain the comments made by the teachers in Phase 1 (see Chapter 6) that they prioritize their teaching according to discipline and to the level of silence in the classroom because they do not want to disrupt lessons next door.

8.2.3. **Teaching materials**

When describing the influences on her teaching, Oksana mentioned learning from her colleagues. She also described how beneficial it is when representatives come from foreign publishers and speak about textbooks and explain the way these can be utilized effectively in the classroom. Oksana found it very useful because, as she
explained “the teachers were taught the Soviet way when there was just reading and learning by heart,” while these seminars present ideas about different ways to teach. In addition, she mentioned how students now have an opportunity to travel more, and when they come back they share their impressions. When they come back from summer holidays, just like one of the students who went to Alcatraz Island, they bring photos and give presentations to the rest of the class.

Changing resources was a key innovation for Oksana. She mentioned that new textbooks and the materials accessible via technology are now full of interesting content that keeps students motivated. She provided an example of how during her teaching practice over ten years ago technology was not available and teachers had to draw visuals to make their lessons more interesting so as to keep their students’ attention. By contrast, nowadays there are so many songs on Youtube that “you can link [them] to any topic.” Indeed, during the observed lessons, she brought her laptop into the classroom and watched the songs she found with her students who sang along. Oksana explained:

Of all activities I like the use of video the most, especially with younger students. Firstly, they absorb the information and new words as sponges, and when you watch the same song for a few times with them, I can see they are singing, they really enjoy it. It also keeps their attention.

Oksana did describe how some textbooks they use at school can be too easy for her students in terms of language, and in this case she finds additional materials. For instance, she employs such grammar books as *Round Up* (Longman), and the ones by Murphy (Cambridge) and by Galitsinskiy (local), as well as other resources she can find on the Internet. Oksana looks for additional materials that match the topic of a lesson, which means she can bring “something new and interesting” to the lesson. She also uses additional textbooks provided by her students who have completed language courses, such as *Boost Your Vocabulary*, and these serve as a source of extra words, phrases, and collocations related to the topic.

Oksana does not have written lesson plans (although she does have a calendar for planning). She explained that it is hard to plan a lesson in advance as it depends so much on students, their preparation, abilities, personalities, and interests. To address
these factors she does not focus solely on learning grammar as she believes that it makes children bored. Her desire is to see them coming to the lesson to learn something new. To this end, she provides cultural, historical or other information about different countries. For instance, when they had a text about a platypus, they discussed that it lives in Australia, and spoke about other Australian animals and where they can be found. She likes presenting her students with something new, for instance, about Great Britain (as observed in another lesson). One interesting moment during observed Lesson 5 occurred when the teacher mentioned that in Ukraine schools have numbers, but in England they do not. This information seemed to surprise the students. They were saying: “Ah, really? What do they have then?” They then found in the text they were reading that instead of a number, the boy’s school had a name – Orange Park School. This reflects a cultural focus of the Ukrainian FLT as described in Chapter 5 Section 5.3.4.

Oksana also uses prescribed texts with her older students in secondary school as a source for home reading. This is when students read a story at home and once a month or so they bring it to read and discuss in the classroom. However, Oksana did say that to her disappointment, there is a lack of books for home reading for younger students, especially those that would be interesting for their age. This desire to find readings for this age group of students may signal that the teacher is targeting a non-linguistic outcome – to develop her students’ literary interests, and to have them read and discuss stories in their original form. In other words, it does seem that she wants to develop her students desire to read, matching these literacy activities with what these students might do in their own language.

Given the absence of the age-appropriate books, with these younger students Oksana used other practices intended to heighten their engagement, such as a lot of rhymes accompanied with movements. Oksana explained that “combining it with the movements helps me to attract students’ attention and it is easier [for them] to remember.” In Lesson 1, for instance, year two students were learning classroom-related vocabulary. Teaching the word *drawers*, the teacher asked students to imagine there are drawers in the desks, to open and close them. Later in the lesson, they sang a song pointing at the objects in the classroom:
What’s in the classroom?
Let’s have a look!
Posters and pictures,
And work in a book...

8.2.4. Practices

Oksana described her lessons as being “integrated” as she attempted to include all four macro skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing – into all her lessons with all age groups. With the older students, she said she prefers starting the lesson with Speaking or a warm-up discussion about various topics. In general she said she likes having students discuss something as they can participate in the process and express different opinions. In the lesson the teacher said her role is to orchestrate the process, asking who has anything to add, who remembers this or that, asking for their opinion, why they think this or that way. She further explained that along with helping students achieve their dreams, which for many is the possibility to travel and work abroad, her desire is to see her students able to assist foreigners in Ukraine. She said: “As a European country that is actively developing, we need high standards of English, and have students motivated to achieve those.”

Oksana described how she likes to keep her lessons fast paced, changing activities, keeping students’ attention, and this was evident during Phase 3 observations. She asked her students to write or read faster, to move on in order to finish on time. In Lesson 4, for example, while students were reading the text they had prepared at home, the teacher asked them to read faster, as fast as the voice on the recording, and with intonation, because otherwise “other children will fall asleep.” Oksana later commented that her students are used to this, and she believes having numerous activities during the lesson helps drill the language, which in turn prepares students for tests.

Oksana suggested that her lessons with secondary school students are communicative. She explained:
Communicativeness for me is when they speak English only, and when they can express their feelings, emotions and thoughts on the given topic… Now we are learning children’s topics, where they just learn words and phrases, grammar, simpler things. When we study the next textbook, a more serious one, then there will be a lot of topics and a number of dialogues [to perform]. So next year I aim to provide maximum feedback – I will speak English and they will speak English.

With these older students, Oksana described how she uses project work to summarize all that students have studied about the topic. It solidifies their knowledge, motivates and involves them cooperatively when they discuss each other’s work. She provided an example of a project done with year fives about the Great Fire of London. For this project, she said, she distributed the text with the story, read it together with the students, did vocabulary work about it, and then on holidays students had to learn it by heart. “But they did not just learn it,” she said, “I told them to do some research and find interesting information about the fire… Many students came well-prepared and even brought some pictures.” She explained that students learn their project presentations by heart and present in front of the classroom. Then the teacher and other students ask questions and vote for the best project.

While it seemed that such project work involved students in creative work and research using a FL, it became clear that it is not a usual classroom routine because out of the 20 lessons by this teacher observed over the course of three weeks, and two other lessons observed a year earlier, there was no example of such a project taking place. Instead, on a couple of occasions students were seen to hand in their projects for marking without having to present them to their classmates. (Some examples are presented in Appendix 10). Even if these students did present orally at some point, this work resembled a PPP sequence, with the last stage done as a home task, rather than as would occur in a task-like cycle with it being language practice occurring as part of the lesson (Skehan, 1996a; Willis, 2004; see Literature Review, Section 3.2.3). Further, the students had to work individually, and their end products were then assessed and any grammar or spelling mistakes corrected. This means that,
although such project practices were suggested by the Phase 2 participants to be task-like, they can serve as a foundation rather than as a substitute for TBLT tasks.

Pair work used with older students also did not appear to be facilitative of meaning-focused activities. Instead, they included reading, writing, and reciting dialogues. For instance, in Lesson 7 year five students had to read a dialogue in pairs:

S1: Hello Peter. How are you?
S2: Fine, thanks. And you?
S1: Fine, thanks.

Once the students had read it, the teacher asked them to close their books and repeat it by memory. In Lesson 10 with year five students, they had to write down a dialogue using the same phrases as those presented in their textbook. Everyone had to “write down their own dialogue,” which they then read aloud one by one. In lesson 12 year seven students recited the dialogue they had learned by heart as a part of their homework. Although students recited this in pairs, they did not look at each other. When they finished reciting, one student asked what mark he got. All students were marked straight away for their performance. In this way these episodes contrast to the earlier extracts with younger students in that the focus was on rote memorisation and reproduction of specific language, and the students did not express their own meaning and their motivation was simply to get a good mark.

Further, despite Oksana’s comments to the contrary (as described earlier), one third of the observed lessons (7 out of 20) focused mainly on grammar. One example of this is Lesson 12 done in year seven where the teacher and students read the rule bit by bit, and then translated it. The teacher also provided some additional examples. Then the students did the related exercises. Each time, they would explain their choice of a word or a tense in Ukrainian. During this lesson the teacher also tried to stop any non-related conversations between the students.

The same present-practice sequence was followed in Lesson 13 with year fives. Here, they first recollected what they had learned about Present Simple in previous years, read the spelling rules and did the exercises. Homework was set which included learning the rule by heart and doing some more exercises. In three other
lessons, students did vocabulary and grammar tests for the teacher to check their knowledge. After the tests were marked, students took them home to present them to their parents as a way “to demonstrate their progress.”

In terms of assessment, the students always seemed eager to know their marks. For example, in Lesson 5 year two students were retelling a poem they had to learn by heart as their homework. They were marked immediately with the marks put into their diary (a special notebook used by students to record their home task and important announcements and by teachers to communicate with parents by recording students’ marks and writing messages). Students seemed to be enthusiastic about getting marks (especially good ones), and kept asking the teacher about these: “Which mark will you give me?” and about those of others: “Which mark did he/she get? Is it ten? Is it twelve?” It was similar with the older students. In many of the lessons, they would receive marks straight after presenting their homework, with the teacher writing these into their diaries for the parents to see.

When a comparison was made between the different aged students and how they were taught, it appeared that while the older students did seem to know more words and grammar, it was with younger ones that the most communicative and task-like activities occurred. As explanation for this, Oksana described how she tries to teach younger students some additional phrases and expressions, such as: Have a nice day, See you tomorrow, See you later, What are you wearing today? “Of course,” she added, “I start preparing students for that from the very beginning.” One of the examples of this occurred in the second lesson with the six- and seven-year-olds. At the beginning of the lesson they were supposed to take turns to ask each other their names, age, and where they lived. Students did not only repeat the questions, but looked at their peer who they were asking, smiled, and shook hands whilst using the phrase “Nice to meet you.” Next, they were asked to express their feelings (How are you?). Here, students’ answers varied greatly and the teacher encouraged them to
express their own meaning, and if needed, ask for help with the language, as depicted in the following excerpt:14

T: How are you?
S1: I am happy and sleepy.15 How are you?
S2: I am scared.
T: Кого боїшся? Чому? (Eng.:16 Who are you afraid of? Why?)
S2: (with a low voice) Завдань багато і важкі (Eng.: There are many tasks and they are difficult). How are you?
S3: I am wonderful. How are you?
The girl who was supposed to answer next asked the teacher:
S4: А як сказати «холодно»? (Eng.: What is the word for “cold”?)
T: Cold (the teacher put her arms around to imitate being cold).
S4: I am cold. How are you?
S5: I am angry.
T: На кого це ти злий? (Eng.: Who are you angry with?)
S5: На папу. (Eng.: With my dad.)

Similarly, when introducing new words, the teacher made links between these and the students’ experiences and emotions. She also used flashcards and encouraged students’ comments:

T: What is it? Chicken.
SS: Chicken.
S1: Я люблю… (Eng.: I like it.)
T: Я тоже очень люблю… (Eng.: I also like it a lot.)
S2: Я люблю chicken тільки в Макдональдсі (Eng.: I like chicken only at McDonalds.)
T: Понятно (Eng.: I see) Cock. What colour is the cock?

14 The lesson excerpts are provided in their original languages to illustrate the cases when L1 and a FL are used. When needed, translation is provided in brackets.

15 This was the second lesson in the morning.

16 The equivalent in English.
Parrot.
S1: Я люблю parrot (Eng.: I like parrots)
T: I love parrots.
S1: I love parrots.

T: Cat
S1: I love you cat!

T: Squirrel.
S: Orange она (Eng.: It is orange.)
T: Якщо ми говоримо про колір волосся у людини чи тварин, як у білочка або лисички, ми не кажемо orange, ми кажемо red (Eng.: When we speak about the hair colour in people or animals, such as a squirrel and a fox, we do not say orange, we say red).

Thus, engaging in this lesson a student used “I like” in L1 to which Oksana responded with a translation. As can be seen from the excerpt, the student used this structure later to express her meaning without being told to do so. Likewise, when a student mentioned the word “orange,” the teacher provided both feedback and an explanation, and accompanied this by writing both words on the blackboard to help her students to remember. As such, these activities resembled a focus on form which occurred when students were trying to make their own meaning (see Literature Review, Section 3.2.3).

8.2.5. Analysis and summary

Oksana represents a teaching context where both new and more traditional elements are strongly evident. These are combined at different levels in different classes and lessons. Seen as an innovator in her school, she employed technology through the use of videos and songs on her laptop, which is illustrative of the focus on technology as an innovation in Ukrainian FLT described in Chapter 6. She also created materials for her students in addition to those provided in their textbooks, with a specific focus
on culture and cross-cultural comparisons, which reflects the focus on culture in the Ukrainian FLT curriculum (Chapter 5). She also described how she employed projects in her classes, seen by many as an innovation (Chapter 6) and an activity similar to tasks (Chapter 7), although the evidence for the implementation of these was less convincing. In her classes, on the one hand, she used activities like singing and presentations, but on the other hand, she had to control movement and the level of noise so as not to disturb the lessons next door. This reflects and explains some aspects of the structured environment in the Ukrainian FLT settings as described in Chapter 6.

This teacher appeared to combine both task-like and non-task-like features in her teaching. Among the task-like features found in the practices of this teacher were catering for student needs, some meaning-based activities with primary school children (somewhat resembling a focus on form), connections made to the real world, and, on occasion, targeting non-linguistic outcomes. First, the teacher was well aware of the interests of her students emanating in part from their increased access to travel, their reading preferences and her young students’ need for movement. Second, on some occasions she responded to her students’ meaning making, which appeared to be more evident with the younger students at lower levels of proficiency. Third, during her lessons the teacher was able to connect some parts to real world activities, such as where students discussed their reading in terms of impressions and ideas – something they do in their L1, they also searched for the information for projects, and shared their travelling experiences. Finally, non-linguistic outcomes were achieved when they presented their projects containing new information to the class. However, as it has been indicated, this activity was reported rather than observed, and so mostly students’ outcomes were evaluated in terms of the language they used.

A task feature such as the gap that necessitates interaction was not observed in this teacher’s practices. Instead, interactions appeared to be primarily motivated by the marks which were given during or mostly at the end of every lesson and written in the diaries for the parents to see, as well as by the use of technology and by a good rapport the teacher managed to establish with her students. Apart from the warm-up
in a couple of the observed lessons, students were also not encouraged to use their own linguistic resources. Even when they were asked to create dialogues similar to those in the textbook, they had to use the structures and vocabulary provided in the exercise. Further, activities with her older students mainly focused on language forms and involved a lot of reading, text translation and grammar exercises. Lastly, even though there were a couple of instances where the teacher responded to the student’s need in the new language, she remained in control of the lessons most of the time adhering to the teacher- rather than learner-centered practices.

A key challenge in this context is the high workload of the teacher who, apart from teaching her subject, had a number of other responsibilities. Given that teacher workload is among the key challenges related to TBLT implementation (Brandle, 2008; Zhang, 2007), introducing tasks in this micro context in Ukrainian FLT would require strategic top-down support for the teacher.

8.3. Teacher 2

8.3.1. The teacher and the school

Olena Olehivna is a young teacher in her early twenties, and it was her third year teaching at the school. Despite her young age, she was highly respected among her colleagues and recommended by the Head of the Department as a communicative-oriented teacher. Indeed, her students were the most active and her lessons appeared to be the most creative of all language classrooms observed in this study. She was also able to clearly articulate what she was doing and why.

Olena seemed to be a devoted professional. Sitting in the teacher’s chair (which she very rarely did during any of her lessons), with a number of books and student submissions stored in neat piles on the table, Olena shared her passion for languages and teaching. She said she had always been fascinated with languages and the opportunities that mastering a FL provides. She described her belief that proficiency in English opens up possibilities to travel and gain experience by learning a variety of ideas and practices from outside Ukraine. She had not originally considered
teaching, however, until a school placement she did as a part of her university degree. Despite being only a few years older than her students, her placement was both successful and enjoyable, so she decided to follow a pathway into teaching to see where it might lead.

Upon graduation, Olena went to work in the school where she had had her placement. The school specialises in FLs and offers a wide range of FLs to study. Because of the school’s language specialisation, all students are required to sit a language test to gain admission. Those who do get through regularly participate in language competitions, both local and international, and student exchanges. Teaching staff members attend regular teacher training programs, and the necessary resources are supplied by the supportive administration. Favourable conditions have also been created for contemporary language teaching, such as small-sized classes and availability of teaching materials (e.g., technology and flash cards). These is what Olena desired for her workplace, and which has resulted in a rewarding teaching experience.

According to Olena, she was still developing her own teaching style at the time of this study. When she commenced teaching, she mainly learned from her colleagues by attending their lessons, a regular practice at her school. She would then try to implement the things she observed, but soon realised not everything worked the same with her students. While she kept sitting in on the lessons of other teachers in her school, she started searching for and developing new teaching ideas and experimented with these new ideas to test if they worked for her students.

Olena has engaged in professional development as a way to develop her teaching capacity. She spoke with enthusiasm about the teaching courses and summer schools organized by the British Council and other similar organisations. She described how much she learned from these opportunities, as well as from the more experienced Ukrainian teachers she interacted with at these courses. At the time of the study she was undertaking some online teaching courses developed by various international organisations. She indicated why this was important, describing how everything (in society and education) changes rapidly and how it is important for a teacher not to stop learning as part of their professional journey. It is a “lifelong process,” she said,
indicating that she is open to new ideas and willing to experiment with new approaches.

8.3.2. The classroom

Olena had her own classroom that she was able to use for all her lessons, something that is not always the case in Ukraine, but is one of the benefits of working in a specialised school. However, this classroom was not easy to find for a first-time visitor. It was a tiny room located behind a small white door. It was originally used for administrative purposes and had only recently been refurbished as a classroom for language teaching. In the classroom there was a poster showing the English alphabet and also alphabet flash cards on the blackboard. High up on the wall there was a poster with the words of the National Anthem of Ukraine and other national symbols. There were six desks (each seating two students), which made it the smallest room observed during the fieldwork. Although the room was very small, it did provide some benefits to the research process, as noted:

*Because the room was so tiny, I had to sit at the extra desk on the other side of the blackboard opposite the teacher’s table. This gave me an interesting observational angle, because instead of seeing the backs of students, I could observe their faces, emotions and gestures. From the front right-hand corner, I could see them communicating, manipulating objects and moving around the classroom. Although this position might have been distracting in other settings, this teacher had her students move and cooperate a lot, so my presence did not seem to be a distraction.*

1 November 2015

8.3.3. Teaching materials

In her lessons, Olena employs a range of teaching materials, including textbooks, Teacher Books, CDs, self-developed printable resources, and a personal laptop. She uses a variety of textbooks by foreign publishers, such as Gateway, Language Choice, Choices, and English World. Olena explained one advantage of working with these publishers is the availability of printable worksheets in the Teacher’s
Book. For example, they contain crosswords, activities for discussions, and games to sustain students’ interest in the lesson. According to Olena, this makes a teacher’s work a lot easier. Another advantage of these textbooks mentioned by the teacher is the availability of CDs and especially DVDs. Based on the information from the professional development courses she had attended, she had the belief that most people are visual learners who get information from what they can see. She had experimented with different approaches and had compared lessons where students could only listen to a recording to those where they could also watch a video. She had found the latter kept students’ attention for much longer.

In addition to the materials provided with the textbooks, Olena uses the World Wide Web to find ideas for warm-up activities which she introduced at the beginning of the lesson, such as pictures or quotes for discussion. She also looks for exercises for grammar practice, and authentic materials to make her lessons closer to the real-life use of language. She learned about the latter at the in-service teacher training courses she had attended, and tries to integrate them into her lessons on a regular basis. When she finds a video, she said, she brings her own laptop and students love watching it in the lesson. Indeed, in one of the observed lessons they watched BBC news on her laptop.

When choosing extra materials for her lesson, Olena applies two main criteria, namely her students’ interests and what she feels correspond closely with the content of the textbook and syllabus she is covering at that time. Olena noted that there are differences between student groups, even those of the same age, and what fascinates and captures the attention of one group may not necessarily go that well with another. This reflects Nunan’s (1995) point about the influence of the classroom context on language teaching, such as interpersonal factors and the dynamics of the group. Secondly, she deemed it essential that any additional material contained the same vocabulary as the class was studying at that time, so as not to overload the students with language input. It was not easy to find such resources and Olena indicated that she often has to create exercises and tests herself, spending extra hours after classes or on the weekends.
8.3.4. **Practices**

Overall, Olena employed a wide range of activities in her classroom. Although she made use of exercises and drills, Olena clearly described how she believed that drilling (grammar) and translation should not be the main focus of FL teaching. Instead, she indicated her belief that teaching was about “understanding” and “communication.” “Understanding” related to what Olena had learned from the summer school training program. In particular, it referred to teaching students relevant life skills during the language lessons, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking. She wanted the students to be active during the lesson and to “switch on their brains.” This inspired her to have students work in pairs and groups, and to arrange debates and discussions.

In order to activate students’ thinking before the start of the discussion, Olena sometimes had them work out who would be in their teams instead of just telling them. In two of the lessons observed in this research she had students pick out a card and, instead of telling each other which card they got, they had to ask questions and described the cards to find a partner. This not only provided students with an activity that had a non-linguistic outcome (i.e., making a team), but also created a gap that made interaction necessary as there was no way to find out their group other than to engage orally with each other. Other examples of information-gap activities that Olena used to promote interaction was having the students fill in crosswords where each partner had only half of the clues, and guessing games where one student was given a word to describe or an activity to show with the help of gestures, and the other student had to guess what it was. Olena, however, explained that the reason she uses these is their resemblance of real-world activities: completing the crosswords and playing games reflect what her students would do outside the classroom.

In addition, Olena explained that solving crosswords and guessing words develop her students’ ability to use their knowledge in context and to present it to others. She provided another example of this contextualization from a lesson where her students had to make up a story using a list of given words about the topic ‘Shopping’ (see the instruction card in Appendix 11). This allowed Olena to see whether they
remembered the meaning of the words, could use them in context, make a coherent story, and present it to others.

Although not mentioned by Olena explicitly, the communicative nature of her lessons was further strengthened by the use of short conversations during the “warm-up” stage at the beginning of her lessons (see Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2). Unlike her colleagues, Olena seemed to use this type of activity more frequently and she appeared to enable her student to engage in genuine communication.

For example, in Lesson 1 she asked the students (in English) to take off their coats, as while autumn was getting rather chilly, the central heating was finally on and it was not cold inside anymore. Then she talked to a new girl who was a refugee from Eastern Ukraine:

T: Would you like us to call you Anna or Ann?
S: Anna
T: Tell us something about yourself. What do you like, don’t like?
S: I am from Lugansk region. I am from X city. I like cooking different dishes and I like learning English.
T: Did you study any other languages?
S: Yes, German.

On Monday mornings, the conversations at the beginning of the lessons related to the way students spent their weekend. An example from Lesson 16 with year seven students is provided below:

T: Tell me what job around the house did you do at the weekend?
S1: I washed the dishes.
S2: I cleaned the room.
T: Serhiy, what about you?
S3: Nothing.
T: You didn’t do anything around the house? What were you doing?
S3: Swimming in the swimming pool in the morning.

At the beginning of Lesson 9, Olena asked the students – again in English – about their Maths test they had had in the previous lesson:
T: How was your Math test?
SS: It was okay.

Likewise, when students came into the classroom for Lesson 17, Olena realised there was a problem and encouraged the students to share what this was about in English. It appeared that the students had to change some arrangements for the upcoming concert and they found it difficult to reach agreement on the changes.

In addition to these, Olena was also regularly observed making use of various opportunities for a genuine communication in English, either planned or spontaneous, during her lessons. In Lesson 3, for instance, there was silence in the classroom while the students were working individually doing an exercise in writing, when one of the students commented:

S: Муха летает (Eng.: There is a fly flying around [in the classroom]).
T: Say it in English.
S: A fly flies?
T: Now at this moment, what tense should be used?
S: A fly is flying.

On this occasion, something similar to the focus on form occurred – Present Continuous was not “the structure of the day,” but the necessity to refer to it was brought about by the situation occurring naturally during the lesson. Importantly, it was a student who initiated this talk.

One factor that seemed to assist in creating the possibilities for genuine interaction is that Olena’s timetable has a few classes during the week where the same class has two FL lessons in a row. This means that instead of 45 minutes a day, they have 1.5 hour with a short break in the middle. According to Olena, this is convenient as it allows her to follow up on the previous activity and practice while students still remember the new material explained in the previous lesson. For instance, at the beginning of Lesson 10, students discussed the text they had read during Lesson 9 about teenagers in Japan and an opportunity emerged to relate this to their own experience:

T: Do teenagers in Ukraine behave like that?
S: Something like that.
T: What do you mean?
S: Small girls that wear bright grown-up clothes.
T: Do you see them wearing bright clothes?
S: Rather often. But it looks stupid.

During one of the interviews Olena indicated that her teaching had changed over the last few years with a particular shift occurring in terms of her role as a teacher. For example, she said she tries to overcome an authoritative teaching style by considering her students’ opinion. Olena said she looked at what her students like doing, whether they prefer working in groups or pairs, and why. One way she did this is by letting them choose some activities they like. “If they want to play the new game I learned, then why not,” she said. For instance, for the lesson about news described above, students wrote the headlines for their stories on a piece of paper (see Appendix 12) and Olena put these on the Blackboard. She then asked the students which story they would like to listen to first, next, and so on thus shifting some of the responsibility for the process of teaching and learning to the students.

Olena described how it is the children who should be the focus of teaching, not the teacher. The teacher, she explained, should coordinate and direct students’ actions. She described how previously she used to ask the question to the class, and only the strongest or most active students responded. It was hard to get others, especially those not confident in their English, to speak. She said there could be some barrier for them and they felt shy and reluctant to participate in the lesson. Working in pairs and groups, in contrast, helps such students feel more comfortable and to speak up. Everyone can take part and express themselves, she said, notwithstanding the mistakes or minimal amount they can say. She said: “I can see they are captivated, and even if it is hard for them to make an utterance, or build a sentence, at least they can say a word, and try to render the meaning they want to express… It makes me happy.”

In fact, Olena was the only participant in this study who practised changing the mode or pair/group partners within one lesson. She explained this was done in order to better engage her students. Her goal was to have students do most of the work, not
her. For Olena an effective lesson was the one where all students engaged in work and no one was bored. Indeed, there were a lot of activity types included in each of her lessons. The following lesson outline demonstrates this diversity (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. *Lesson 2 plan (Year ten students)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Teacher-students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Individual work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking comprehension</td>
<td>Whole class mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher asks students about their ideas on the topic</td>
<td>Teacher-students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary work – locating and translating new words in the text</td>
<td>Whole class mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Pair work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Whole class mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up language advice from the teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During group and pair discussions Olena walked around the classroom monitoring and helping to maintain interaction. When her students wanted to express their own meaning, Olena provided them with some support. For instance, in Lesson 13, the students discussed their preferences of the different types of housing available and then reported about their neighbour’s choice. When one student was not happy about his partner’s representation of his tastes, he objected in L1, and the teacher helped him express his objection in English:

T: What about Bohdan?
S1: He don’t like boat house.
T: He.
S1: He doesn’t like boat house.
S2: Hi! (Eng.: No!)

T: How do you say in English?

S2: ?

T: No, it’s false.

S2: It’s false. I like boat house because you can travel on it.

More complex peer cooperation occurred in Lesson 3, where students worked in groups to compile a menu for the school canteen (i.e., achieve a non-linguistic outcome). They had to think through the three courses and describe the ingredients of every meal. In fact, the sequence of this lesson reflected a TBLT-like sequence with a pre-task, task, and post-task activities as per Willis (2004):

1. Pre-task: Brainstorm – work in groups writing down as many words as possible for different types of food the teacher says (everything connected with bread; things that you add to food; now make a list about fish, etc.)
2. Task: Pair work – making up a menu for the school canteen.
3. Report: Presentation of the menu, feedback from the classmates.
4. Language focus: Food-related vocabulary exercises in the textbook.

In this lesson, students were not given specific vocabulary or grammar structures they had to use. First, they brainstormed all the words related to different types of food they knew, relying on their knowledge from the topic as well as general knowledge. In this activity there were occasions when students were learning from each other, the value of which is not generally discussed in the Ukrainian FLT context (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.4). The following excerpt illustrates one of such instances:

S1: Что это ты записала? (Eng.: What is it that you wrote?)

S2: Борода.

S1: А что это такое? (Eng.: What is it?)

S2: Это репа. (Eng.: It means beetroot.)

One of the group reports at the end of the activity was the following:

For the first dish we have green salad which consists of cucumbers, onion, olives and olive oil, and scampi with garlic sauce. The second part is a cream
soup with pumpkin. The main dish is roast beef with fried potato. And for a
dessert we would like to have ice-cream and drink coffee.

Therefore, by drawing on their existing language knowledge, the students produced a
non-linguistic outcome. After the first group had presented their menu, the teacher
asked their classmates: “What do you think? Would you like to have this menu at
school?”

In addition to this, and as another factor that might have contributed to the increased
interaction and collaboration, Olena was also the only teacher observed in this study
who practised changing the classroom layout. For instance, in Lessons 4 and 11 the
students prepared news to report to their classmates and Olena put four desks
together to make a “round table.” The students seemed to respond positively to this
change and asked the teacher if they could do the same next time.

At the same time, not all of the activities included active interaction and
collaboration. In fact, Olena said she prefers silence during reading activities so that
students can focus on what they read. She explained she follows this rule because
otherwise the students would be distracted and would not understand what they are
reading. To balance this she likes to combine more active parts of the lesson such as
talking and debating with calmer activities such as reading. Lesson 7 was an example
of the way Olena moved from the exercises performed individually in silence to
interaction. The topic of the lesson revolved around English as an international
language. In the exercise, the students had to match words with their explanations.
After the students had worked on the exercise individually in silence, they read the
answers one by one. Among the phrases they had to match there was “native
speaker,” defined as “somebody who speaks the language from birth.” Olena used
this opportunity to refer to the students’ own experience:

T: Did you have experience of speaking in English with a native speaker?
S1: Yes, it was interesting to speak with native speaker because they have
correct pronunciation and you can improve your own language.
T: When did you communicate?
S1: Two years ago.
T: With whom did you communicate?
S1: With my uncle’s friend.
T: Which country was he from?
S1: From England.

... 
T: Kate, you were in Egypt. Did you communicate in English?
S2: No, but I was in the camp and there were two people from America and they spoke English, and we communicated in it as well.
T: Igor, did you communicate in English?
S3: My mother.
T: And you?
S3: No, my mother communicate.

It is important to note that Olена followed the PPP sequence to introduce new grammar. This happened in the six of the twenty observed lessons. Lesson 15 with year eight students exemplified this sequence:

1. Reading sentences on the Blackboard exemplifying the new structure.
2. Explanation of the purpose of the structure.
3. Writing down the rule (the use of relative pronouns).
4. Analysing the use.
5. Further rule (pronoun omission).
6. Practice (guessing game).
7. Practice (written exercises).
8. Controlled production – students write down true sentences about themselves using relative pronouns.

Olена believed this was the most efficient way to learn grammar: “First, there is a grammar form, of course. If we studied it before, the students have to provide their own examples. Then there are training exercises in the textbook… followed by what I have prepared myself, and there might be a game.” This sequence was seen by the teacher as an effective way of teaching grammar.
Challenges

Olena Olehivna identified a number of challenges related to the use of meaning-focused activities. In particular, she was concerned with the timeframe, the use of L1, assessment, and classroom management.

The first set of challenges was related to the program requirements and time restrictions which Olena had to follow. Out of the three teachers, she was the only one to prepare written plans for all her lessons. “The students like speaking and they can speak all lesson long,” she said, “but they should follow the curriculum and work with the textbook.” Olena explained how she tried to do all the exercises in the textbook by combining communicative activities where students could express meaning while doing these exercises.

Olena’s lessons, therefore, usually consisted of a pattern of change between forms-focused activities and meaning-focused interaction. In Lesson 7, for instance, students worked with proverbs printed out by the teacher and explained the meaning. They then read a text in the coursebook and did the comprehension exercises, which was followed by a conversation about students’ experiences with native speakers. Next, there was another text-related exercise – finding a line in the text containing particular information. Next, Olena asked the students to contemplate whether it is important to study English in Ukraine. This combination of approaches meant that a wide range of activities was done within 45 minutes. To enable her lessons to run efficiently, she kept reminding students to be quick, finish on time, be ready to proceed, use the time productively, stop talking, and to concentrate.

The use of L1 by the students was identified by Olena as another obstacle to genuine communication. In Lesson 3, for instance, when the groups had to create an “ideal menu” for the school canteen, all students were active but they spoke mainly Russian or Ukrainian. To encourage her students speak in English, Olena tried to do so as much as possible herself. Olena had very good language skills. In fact, she used the least L1 in her lessons than any other teacher observed in the study. She used it only in very rare cases to provide translation where an explanation did not work. Despite
this, however, the students kept switching into English only when the teacher was nearby.

Regarding assessment during the lesson, Olena said that she finds it hard to grade and give a mark for the speaking work that occurs. She explained that she needs to think and compare the students to each other, which takes time. Instead, Olena reported that she marks tests or quizzes as it is easier for her. This could be the reason behind the frequent short tests she gave to her students and how she collected the papers to mark after the lesson, while providing the least verbal feedback in the actual lessons when compared to the other observed teachers. Therefore, even in this communicative-oriented classroom students were assessed mainly for their performance of forms-focused activities.

8.3.5. Analysis and summary

Olena’s practice appeared to differ considerably from the other participants in the study. To start with, her students were the most active in FL communication during the lessons. Significant amounts of time were allotted for group and pair work that required student cooperation – an aspect that appeared to be missing in other classrooms observed in this study (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.4). This cooperation was facilitated by the frequent movement of the students around the classroom to form new groups and pairs according to the new instructions or student interests. Furthermore, in three of the observed lessons the classroom layout was changed by the teacher so that the students were given an opportunity to work at the “roundtable” – while all other lessons observed in this study took place in a more traditional setting (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1).

In addition to this, instead of asking students to stop their conversations in L1, Olena encouraged them to go on but to switch to a FL. This was very unusual as other teachers observed in this study would normally discourage their students from “talking outside the topic” (See Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2). Olena was also the only participant who spoke English mostly in her lessons, even with the youngest students. Her approach was to motivate students to learn better in order to understand
the FL, and also to provide them with the model of her own speech – as it has been noted, her own FL skills were at a very high level.

Although Olena did not use tasks as such, many examples from her teaching practice resembled features of TBLT: needs assessment, focus on meaning, activities that reflected the real world, student-centeredness, the gap necessitating interaction, and non-linguistic outcomes (see the framework for the task-like activity in Chapter 4 Section 4.7.1).

To start with, Olena exercised careful consideration of her students’ needs in a number of ways. First, she utilized a variety of teaching materials to cater for different learning styles and interests of her students. Second, she practised action research which included observation of different student groups with the aim to tailor the lessons to match various personalities and group dynamics. Third, she realised the practical needs of her students and attempted to include the development of “life skills” in her lessons by engaging students’ critical thinking, cooperation and problem-solving skills. In addition to this, Olena engaged her students’ prior knowledge and created links to the real world activities. These attempts to promote student interaction were motivated by her desire to see her lessons focused on students, where the latter are active and have a chance to contribute to the way the lesson is conducted. In this way she successfully created student-centred lessons by involving her students in the processes of decision-making and assessment.

Olena also used a number of activities that involved genuine communication with a focus on meaning. These included warm-ups at the beginning of the lessons, as well as occasional natural conversations in FL during the lessons. The teacher also tried to connect texts and exercises to the students’ life by initiating conversations about their experiences of what they were reading or writing about. On a couple of occasions, “a Focus on Form” appeared to emerge from the communication that occurred in the class. She was the only teacher to use “The target language [as] a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 120). Finally, and seemingly without an explicit intention to do so, Olena was the only teacher in the study who used activities that created a gap that
required interaction, and activities that had a non-linguistic outcome, such as compiling a suitable menu or forming a group.

At the same time, these practices posed a number of challenges. Olena explained that involving large amounts of interaction in her lessons made it harder for her to manage student behaviour and evaluate their performance. In addition, it was harder for this teacher to implement her interaction- and student- focused activities with younger students who had very little language proficiency. These challenges point to the important aspects to be considered in teacher education and curriculum development in the Ukrainian educational context.

8.4. Teacher 3

8.4.1. The teacher and the school

Tamara Andriivna, the third teacher, works in a non-specialised school located in a town in Kyiv region. In the initial meeting, both the principal and the teacher were doubtful if they could provide any useful data for the study given the school was regional and non-specialised, and so not equipped as much as others might be. However, they agreed that such conditions should be taken into account if an innovation is to be developed for schools in Ukraine.

Tamara has vast teaching experience – over thirty years – and is a kind woman in her late fifties. She is respected among her colleagues, and is “a sensible and clever” educator as one other teacher described her. Tamara graduated from the country’s main Linguistic University in the 1980s and teaches two FLs – English and French. Since that time, she has had extensive teaching experience in various schools, small and big, central and regional, and to a range of ages. She said she loves her profession and is not thinking of changing it. Indeed, she explained, the salary is so low that only people who really love their job continue teaching in schools.

In this school, students do not have to pass exams to be admitted. It is a big school where the number of students has grown in recent years due to the increase in the city’s population, including absorbing refugees from the Eastern part of the country.
For this reason, the school is organized into two shifts where the morning shift begins at 8 a.m. and the afternoon one at 2.30 p.m. To accommodate two shifts, the breaks between the lessons were made short, ten minutes each, and student groups made bigger. Nevertheless, Tamara worked with only a half cohort of students in most of her classes (i.e., 10 to 23 students) due to the efforts of the school principal who has a high regard for languages.

8.4.2. **The classroom**

Unlike the other two teachers, Tamara does not have a fixed classroom but travels from one lesson to another depending on where the lesson is appointed – a usual situation for non-specialised schools. This might be somewhat burdensome when the lessons that follow each other are in primary, then secondary, and then back in primary school (or vice versa) as those are located on different floors in the opposite sides of the building. Given the breaks have been shortened, the teacher has to quickly move up and downstairs to start the next lesson on time. In view of these conditions, Tamara was provided a bookcase in one of the classrooms where she can store books, teaching materials, and students’ copybooks she collects for marking.

Despite this lack of personal space, Tamara appeared to have adjusted to such a hectic routine and managed to manoeuvre her way among junior and senior students in the corridors rather quickly, leaving some time for showing the researcher around and speaking about school and students.

8.4.3. **Teaching materials**

The school is supplied with locally published mainstream textbooks. There are no recordings for these and so in the past students missed on the opportunity to listen to authentic language use. Tamara explained that teachers tried to find audio recordings from elsewhere, which also meant that they had to create classroom activities to accompany such recordings themselves. However, since the Independent Testing was introduced the teachers have realised that these textbooks are not suitable as they do not allow for the “use of English” required in this assessment. This mismatch
encouraged the teachers to start working with the British-published textbooks in combination with the old ones. Another reason for this shift, as Tamara explained, was that the local professionals who compiled local textbooks had not lived in the FL environment and so were not familiar with the intricacies of the spoken language. The British textbooks, on the other hand, provide more authentic language use and are based on the current teaching approaches. As Tamara said, “we learn together with the children we teach.”

At the same time, this teacher believes that the old textbooks can still be very helpful, and particularly for teaching reading. Comparing two student groups – the one that started with the local textbook (which provides an extensive instruction for reading step-by-step) and the one that used the British textbook (learning reading “by analogy” without explicit instructions and drilling), Tamara said the former learned to read sooner and could read better, while it took twice as much time for the latter class to catch up. Further challenges for the latter group were related to the fact that the British textbook is a one-language book which requires students to read and understand complex instructions from the outset. Therefore, in Tamara’s opinion, while the first year of a FL course in non-specialised schools is introductory, in the second year students should be taught how to read in the FL before the British course book is introduced.

When choosing additional materials to use, Tamara checks whether the vocabulary involved corresponds with the topic they are studying at the moment. She also pays attention to whether it is comprehensible for her students and if there is a sufficient number of exercises for students to master the new material. In addition, Tamara mentioned that nowadays, due to the technological development, students can learn a FL not only in the classroom, but also by means of social networking, gaming, and by using technology.

8.4.4. Practices

According to Tamara, during the decades of her work as a teacher many changes have occurred in the approach to FLT in Ukraine. A key change has been a shift from
the focus on reading, translation and writing that was in place in the Soviet period (i.e., before 1991) to a focus on spoken language. She claimed: “We are now teaching the language so that children can apply their knowledge in oral communication.” In line with this approach, Tamara described how discussion is among her favorite activities in the classroom. After students have read a story, she explained, they can express their attitude towards the plot or a character.

In practice, however, Tamara’s lessons contained little if any real communication in FL. Students mainly worked independently, occasionally answering teacher’s questions one by one. The only activities where students appeared to imitate conversational type language took place in primary school in the form of reciting poems, singing songs, and playing games. For instance, in Lesson 2 the year ones were playing a game where two students come to the blackboard and one tells the other what actions they should do:

S1: Smile.
S2: I can smile (smiles).
S1: Jump.
S2: I can jump (jumps).
S1: Dance.
S2: I can dance (dances).

Students seemed to enjoy this type of pair work, and especially the movements they got to do as a part of it. With this age group, this activity could be classified as age-appropriate and – in a way – real-life, as pointed out by the teacher, on the grounds that primary school students play games in their everyday life. However, the main focus of this activity was drilling the structure “I can” rather than on having meaningful interaction. Later in the lesson, this class sang a song with different students role-playing the five fingers:

SS (singing together): Tommy Thumb, Tommy Thumb, how are you, how are you?
S1 (Tommy Thumb): Very well, thank you! Very well, thank you!
SS: Fly away! Fly away!
SS: Peter Pointer, Peter Pointer, how are you, how are you?
S2 (Peter Pointer): Very well, thank you! Very well, thank you!

SS: Fly away! Fly away!

In this game, again, the focus was on drilling the vocabulary items from the topic “Parts of the body,” and names of the fingers in particular.

Lessons with older students incorporated a lot of listening, choral repetition, reading, translation, drilling, and dictations. Reading and translation of a text was usually given as a home task to be checked in the next lesson. After their home task had been checked, students mainly worked individually, reading and writing in silence, and then came to the blackboard one by one to write the answers for others to check. The atmosphere of the lesson is illustrated in the following excerpt from the field notes:

*I am sitting at the back of the classroom. It feels like I am one of the students – most of the time they are writing something down just as I am, occasionally looking at the blackboard to check their answers. Also, today I realized that there is a loud clock on the wall above the blackboard in one of the rooms. It ticks loudly especially when students work in silence, which they did a lot today. I first thought it could distract them from writing, but it could also facilitate discipline by reminding students about the timing, as an addition to the teacher’s questions: “Have you finished? Who is ready? You have two minutes left. Your time is over.”*

24 November 2015, Lesson 5

Apart from the first two years of primary school where marking is done verbally (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.5), students were given a mark straight after they completed an activity. Not all students would get the mark, but those who managed to complete an exercise first or who asked would come up to the blackboard and write the answers. For instance, in Lesson 6, after revising the grammar rule for the Present Continuous tense, Tamara said (in Ukrainian): “We will now tell what the people in the picture are doing, using the words from the box. For instance, what is the man in the first picture doing?” Then she provided the first example herself (in English): “He is surfing” and wrote this sentence on the blackboard. The students had to write the rest of the sentences in their copybooks on their own without any discussion. The next
instruction was to write down questions and answers, following the teacher’s examples provided on the blackboard:

- Is he water-skiing?
- No, he is surfing.

The first student to finish the exercise came to the teacher with her diary to get a mark. A few other students seemed to be upset they did not make it first and asked the teacher if they could get a mark as well. At the same time, the teacher attempted to mark as many students as possible as illustrated by the following conversation which was conducted in Ukrainian:

T: Is anybody ready?
S: I am ready.
T: OK, but you have already got your mark. Who hasn’t got a mark?

In a number of activities where students were supposed to speak (i.e., express their opinion or discuss a topic), they first wrote the sentences down in their copybooks and then read them out loud one by one. For instance, in Lesson 5 year seven students were learning how different verbs of liking and disliking are used in a sentence (i.e., with the infinitive, the infinitive without “to,” or the verb with the “ing” ending). After the teacher’s explicit instruction about the formulas drawn on the blackboard, the students had to write down their own sentences using these structures. While students were reading them out loud, the teacher corrected their grammar mistakes:

S (reads): Mary prefer swimming.
T: Підмет який? (Eng.: What is the subject [in this sentence]?)
S: Mary.
T: Тоді prefers. (Eng.: Then you should write “prefers.”)

Likewise, in Lesson 7 year nine students had to listen to the tape and decide which feelings the speaker was talking about. After the listening part of the lesson was finished, the students were picked by the teacher to read the answers they had noted down in their textbooks:

S: Bella is nervous. Anna upset.
T: is upset.
S: Anna is upset. Ben is embarrassed. Claudia happy.
T: is happy.
S: Claudia is happy.

Here again the teacher did a grammar check without any discussion (e.g., asking why they thought that Anna was upset).

Similarly, it was observed in Tamara’s lessons that work with the text was based on the comprehension exercises, questions and true/false statements. Students either had to find the answer in the text and read it out loud, or provide Yes/No answers. Sometimes, such as in Lesson 7 with year nine students, they would give a one-word answer:

T: What is common in all these texts?
SS: Problems.
T: They have problems of what kind?
SS: Friends.
T: Yes, they have problems with their friends.

Sometimes the teacher asked questions which she then answered herself. For instance, in Lesson 12 Tamara said (starting a new topic about Mass Media): “I don’t know if you often watch TV, but I don’t. Now open your books.” When asked why the students did not speak or discuss more, the teacher explained that their language proficiency is too low. Therefore, there seemed to be a considerable gap between the desirable communicative teaching and the reality of the classroom, which appeared to be based on teachers’ perception of her students’ ability. Clearly, for change to occur in this context, strategies that would help the teacher to engage low proficiency students in communication are needed.

Although communicative teaching was stated as a desirable goal (even though it did not manifest in the lessons), Tamara indicated that she is a firm supporter of explicit grammar instruction. She is convinced that it is essential for students to understand how to build sentences in order for them to express themselves correctly. At the beginning they can do it by analogy, but with the increasing difficulty of the material they should be able to understand what they are doing and why. For this reason, even
primary school students were taught grammar rules and terms like ‘a noun’ and ‘a verb,’ what happens to a subject of the sentence in questions and so on. She believes a special grammar reference book with grammar exercises should be used for such training. “Although some might say that this grammar-related knowledge is not essential for communication,” she said, “without this understanding a student cannot make a correct sentence on their own.” Accuracy is, therefore, the primary goal for Tamara.

Further, Tamara utilizes translation as one of the key tools that help students understand how the language works. To her mind, if students are not taught how to translate, they will just learn the phrases by heart without understanding their meaning and as a result, will not be able to use new language in different situations. Thus, unlike the lessons in specialised schools described in the previous sections, Tamara’s students translated all the texts and sentences they had to listen to or read. In 12 out of 20 lessons observed in this case study students read and translated a text or a dialogue sentence by sentence, demonstrating how they had done their homework. The same happened when students read comprehension questions. First, they would translate the question, then they would read the answer from the text and then translate that as well.

This focus on translation was highlighted in Lesson 10. The theme of this lesson with year eight students was “Poetry.” The students listened to a poem provided on the CD, and then read it in their textbook and translated it line by line. Next, the teacher started a conversation in Ukrainian about the features of poetry as a literary genre:17

T: As you can see, it is not a usual text. It is a poem. What is a distinctive feature of a poem?
SS: The rhyme.
T: The same happens in poems written in English. You noticed that when we were translating, there was no rhyme anymore. Therefore, when we translated it we did not get a poem. In order to translate a poem as a poem, one needs

17 Fully translated into English for the reader.
special skills. Now let us read about the special features of poems in your textbook…

Tamara has a few strategies or sequences she usually adheres to in her practices. In her opinion, first of all students should be taught to read so that they can get information themselves using different sources, such as the Internet, so they can read and understand what is required. Next, she believes that what is taught should be simple at first with a gradual increase in difficulty. For her, it is important to be consistent and not jump from one thing to another abruptly. It is also important to revise what has been taught as students do not live in the language environment. Working with the same students from the very beginning (year one) till they graduate, Tamara said, helps her notice and address any gaps she sees appearing year in and year out. This allows her to fulfill the principle of continuity ensuring that students gradually acquire new knowledge and skills without any gaps or shifts in direction.

Tamara strictly adheres to a sequence in her grammar teaching: “First by analogy, following the example, then exercises to complete sentences, then making up their own sentences, and of course there should be translation from their L1 into English.” Only then, “once they can translate complex sentences on their own, we can work with the situations, and gradually move towards their own written statements.” For Tamara, a lesson is effective “when students have no problems with their homework because you have prepared them well.” As a result, her lessons followed the present-practice model, but left out the production stage, which is typical for Ukrainian FLT (see Chapter 6 Section 6.2.3). The structure of Lesson 5 below illustrates this point:

**Presentation**

- Teacher writes the synonyms for ‘like’ and ‘dislike’ on the blackboard.
- Teacher explains which of these verbs are followed by the to-infinitive, infinitive without to, or the -ing form.
- Teacher gives examples.
Practice

- Students write down their own examples following the patterns provided on the blackboard.
- Students read sentences one by one and the teacher provides feedback.
- Exercises: complete the sentences, complete the dialogue.
- Home task: write sentences about other people using the patterns learned in the lesson.

At the same time, Tamara said she wants her students to develop an ability to use this knowledge in real life. She explained that she sees communicativeness of teaching as “an attempt to convince a child they need it in their everyday life, not just to get knowledge but also for communication, for getting information [they need]. That it is as important as their mother tongue.” She said “we teach so they can use it.” For her, communicativeness is an ability demonstrated when children use those language expressions they learn at school in practice. This happens in their everyday life through emails and different social networks. She said that in her opinion, writing should remain as equally as important as speaking as many things her students will need to do in real life will be done in writing, for instance when they need to compile a Resume to apply for a job.

Further, Tamara described how she believes that helping children understand why they are learning a FL and what they need it for helps to motivate their learning. To achieve this motivation, she indicated that she tells students from the very first days in her class what they study the language for and why it is important. She also provides examples of her previous students who now use a FL at work or who have even migrated abroad. Lesson observations, however, provided only very brief illustrations of the connection of language items to the lives of her particular students. For instance, in Lesson 9 when the teacher was presenting new vocabulary, instead of translating the word “rich” she said: “you know ‘Rich’ juice” (a brand popular in Ukraine), and when explaining the new word “roll” from a tongue-twister in Lesson 20, she provided an example: “roll – as in sushi roll.”
As in the other case studies, Tamara also described analyzing what her students have achieved and making changes for her next group of students. For instance, she reported trying to cater for her students’ interests and noticing differences between the groups of students of the same age. With the primary school children she prefers songs and game activities. She said she always teaches children a lot of songs regardless of the availability of the music. She said she starts with the nursery rhymes which she claimed they remember until graduation. She smiled when recollecting the graduation concerts where they recite these rhymes as a sign of gratitude for her work. Tamara said: “I am so pleased they still remember such things.” With the middle school children, she said, after-class activities are popular. They prepare small plays in English to perform on stage. After holidays, students come up to her asking which play they are going to do this time. This year, she told the students to go and find one themselves and they suggested a script for Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. This example is particularly interesting as it illustrates that even participants whose practices were very teacher-centered appeared to encourage some student initiative.

For Tamara, academic teaching and character education are inseparable. She shared that when she worked in a village school and was struggling as a language teacher without any technology, “the principal told me one thing that I have followed since then. He said that students are taught not through the technological devices or textbooks, but through the personality of a teacher.” Encouraged by her own teacher to become a language educator, and inspired by that teacher’s neat and elegant appearance, Tamara tries to pass this on to her students through the way she presents herself. During the study she always looked and acted professionally, being organized, neat, welcoming, and reliable. In addition to this, she tries to integrate FLT with other subjects. Tamara also described how in her lessons she refers to history, Ukrainian studies and traditions. To do this, she utilizes materials available in the textbooks as she deems they are very informative and widen the students’ worldview. These aims, additional to those of the language teaching, are in line with the multiple-goal approach of the Ukrainian curriculum described in Chapter 5 Section 5.3.3.
Tamara also outlined how she believes professional growth is important for her. In her final interview Tamara indicated: “I try to learn the state-of-the-art things, but only those applicable to the conditions I am working in.” This comment might explain the considerable gap between the attempts of this teacher to update her practices and make her lessons more communicative and the actual practices that were observed.

8.4.5. Analysis and summary

Similar to the other two teachers, Tamara emphasized the multiple goals she had in her lessons. As such, she aimed to prepare her students for life in the modern world, broaden their general knowledge, particularly about the cultures of the other countries, and to teach them to be neat and punctual by her own example. Perhaps due to the restrictions in time and facilities, Tamara did not use additional materials to achieve these goals. What assisted her in this regard were textbooks that already included texts about history, architecture, and geography (e.g., the Hadrian’s Wall).

Another similarity between Tamara and the other two case study teachers was her acknowledgement about communicative teaching being a recent change in local FLT and a feature she wants to have in her own classroom teaching. She expressed a preference towards the foreign-published textbooks and emphasized the importance of the real-life connection in her teaching, as well as her intention to cater for her students’ needs and interests. As with the other teachers, she employs different activities for her younger and older students. For instance, she uses a lot of games, songs and role plays in primary school, while secondary school students do much more reading and writing.

On the other hand, it was observed that meaningful communication happened very rarely, if at all, in Tamara’s lessons. Students provided short answers, usually reading them straight from the text, and were not invited to elaborate. All the questions were teacher-initiated, and students were not seen to be working in pairs or groups, with the exception of games in primary school. Further, Tamara appeared to believe that explicit grammar instruction, drilling and translation are the key conditions to
develop students’ ability to understand the language and use it meaningfully. She is convinced that without conscious manipulation of the language, students will be unable to use their new knowledge in practice.

One of the key challenges for Tamara in updating her practices appeared to be related to her work conditions. Indeed, her case was the most illustrative of the under-resourcing described in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3.6). She did not have facilities conducive to FLT, which also meant that she had to share a tape-recorder with other teachers, and this made it logistically more difficult to use additional materials. In fact, Tamara was the only teacher who did not use any additional visuals or print outs with her students. At the same time, however, as it was also found in other schools (see Chapter 6 Section 6.3.5), both the teacher and school administration were trying to find ways to overcome these problems. For instance, the school principal arranged a time table so that the FL teachers had smaller classes (only 2 out of 20 observed lessons taught by Tamara had a group of over 20 students). However, Tamara did have to move between classrooms and floors quickly so that every lesson could commence and finish on time.

Overall, Tamara’s actual practices can be described as behaviourist rather than communicative as they did not encourage genuine communication but rather required students to use specific predetermined language. There were neither information gaps nor non-linguistic outcomes involved in any of the lesson activities. Therefore, while Tamara described how she focuses on meaning, makes connection to real life, and considers student needs, these practices can be characterised as non-task-like. For tasks to be used in this context, there is a need to integrate them with current beliefs about translation and language focus. Further, lessons involving tasks should not require additional resources, including time, or complex logistical management, and should be suitable for a variety of different classrooms.
8.5. Chapter summary

The three cases described in this chapter were chosen to illustrate different locations and contexts for FLT in Ukraine and school types. A number of similarities and differences were identified across the cases.

All three teachers shared awareness of the student needs. In particular, all of them reported adjusting what they do according to how the various groups respond to different activities. They also catered for different ages and proficiency levels through their choice of activities. They all agreed that teaching should be related to students’ life and tried to make this connection by referring to the current pop culture, food, travel experiences, future careers and needs. They also integrated a language focus with a focus on culture through the use of texts, additional materials, and projects.

Another similar feature was that the teachers recognised the changes happening in education in general and FLT in particular. All described the requirement for a communicative orientation in FLT, an increased need to use a FL in practice in real life, and the heightened role of technology in teaching and learning. All shared a desire to teach more communicatively (at least in terms of what they said, if not what they did), have their students motivated to practise and to speak more. They also indicated that there are increased possibilities to learn and use a FL outside of the classroom.

However, only two of the teachers (1 and 2) were observed engaging their students in meaningful conversations in FL, mainly in the warm-up activities at the start of the lessons. Teacher 2 was the only one who encouraged her students to express themselves throughout the lesson. She was also observed encouraging her students to shift from L1 to English, while Teacher 1 stopped such conversations on the ground that L1 should not be used by the students. Even so, Teacher 1 did respond to her students’ needs in the new language when it was within the topic studied at the time. By contrast, students in Case Study 3 classes were not prompted to express their own meaning, and only used English for writing exercises, or providing short answers to spoken questions. Finally, while all three teachers followed a PPP sequence when
teaching new language, only Olena (Teacher 2) incorporated the third phase in her lessons.

Of the three teachers, Teacher 3 appeared to be somewhat restricted in her use of additional materials. While she did combine the mainstream textbook with the grammar books for her students’ practice, she did not use any videos with her students, nor did she have them make presentations. In contrast, the two other teachers brought their laptops to the classroom, and incorporated this technology into their lessons. This might be related to the fact that Tamara (Teacher 3) is the only one in this Phase 3 from a non-specialised school, a school type that was found in the previous phases to have less flexibility and fewer resources.

While none of the teachers reported deliberate efforts to focus on form in the course of meaningful communication, both Oksana (Teacher 1) and Olena (Teacher 2) appeared to have these elements in their lessons. In terms of creating a gap that would make interaction necessary, Olena was the only teacher who demonstrated attempts to do this, although her main goal in doing this was to reflect real-life activities.

All three teachers did marking in the majority of their lessons. Further, students in all three settings expressed their expectations to be marked, and seemed to be motivated mainly by getting a tangible evaluation of their efforts. A drawback of this was evident in the second case where Olena reported difficulties connected to marking students’ communication and especially where there was a non-linguistic outcome (i.e., reaching a consensus by a group or expressing their viewpoints in a discussion). Olena was the only participant to integrate a non-linguistic outcome in her practices, and there appeared to be no policy direction as to the marking criteria for this.

Finally, even though all three teachers attempted to cater for their students’ interests and needs, their practices appeared to be mainly teacher-centred. Olena’s case provided a few exceptions, including lessons where students worked at the round table in contrast to the usual teacher-fronted classroom. Olena also gave her students an opportunity to choose from several activities or topics to work on next.
An overview of these similarities and differences provides further information regarding the possibilities of TBLT use in a variety of post-Soviet classrooms, as well as benefits and challenges of its prospective use. A discussion about this is provided in the next chapter.
Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1. Overview

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to the literature review and the Research Questions, namely: What are the current FLT curriculum and practices in schools in post-Soviet Ukraine? Are there potential benefits of implementing TBLT in school FLT contexts in Ukraine? What challenges are associated with the prospective implementation of TBLT in Ukrainian schools? Hence, the first section (9.2) addresses key features of the local FLT context in Ukrainian schools. The second section (9.3) provides a discussion of the potential benefits of TBLT implementation in this context, and the third section (9.4) outlines the potential challenges of such implementation. The chapter ends with a summary of the main points of this discussion.

9.2. Post-Soviet FLT context

This section discusses the findings pertinent to the first Research Question and consists of four parts. Firstly, a review of Ukrainian FLT is given and this provides a background for the rest of the chapter. This is followed by a discussion about the key features of the local FLT context, particularly those aspects that need to be taken into consideration if TBLT is to be introduced, as well as those that resemble certain TBLT features and so can be used as a foundation for the development of TBLT practices. The section concludes with an outline of the specific needs of FLT in post-Soviet Ukraine as identified by the local stakeholders.

9.2.1. FLT in Ukrainian schools: An overview

To provide contextual information for this research, the FLT curriculum in Ukraine was described in Chapter 5, followed by a description of FLT practices in Ukrainian schools in Chapter 6. In this way, the key features of the micro and macro contexts (as per Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4) were identified and further elaborated with the help of three case studies in Chapter 8. These features include the following:
transformation, multiple goals, focus on culture, weakened centralization, restricted flexibility, a combination of “forms” and “meaning” in the curriculum and a struggle for meaning in practice, connection to real life, a structured environment, and under-resourcing. Based on these, three overarching findings pertinent to the first Research Question are discussed in this section, namely non-linear transformation, different opportunities across the public education sector, and a divergence between the official and actual version of FLT in Ukraine.

As the Background and Findings Chapters indicate, Ukrainian FLT is experiencing transformation of the type that reflects the general level of change occurring across the country. As a part of this transformation there is a growing variety of schools, curricula, and textbooks, although these are still centrally prescribed by the MOES. Despite these changes, various stakeholders also described how it is important to preserve some aspects of local FLT, such as reading and grammar teaching approaches that have evolved over time in Ukraine. In fact, the participants appeared to have considerable pride in their local FLT history.

These findings provide further support for the literature on educational development in post-communist societies (e.g., Bain, 2010; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2003; Silova, 2010), specifically that change is influenced by both the old and the new. As such, the findings provide illumination of Silova’s (2010) use of the term “transformation” (as adapted from Verdery, 1996) to denote the uniqueness and diversity of changes in these countries based on historical, political, and socio-cultural factors. This is in direct contrast to the use of the term “transition” with the implication of this being a linear change into Western models of education and society (Silova, 2010, p. 9) – one that is the usual expectation intimated in the literature.

The current findings align with a glocalization perspective of change management (Carr, 2003; East, 2008; Robertson, 1992; Waters & Vilches, 2013) which emphasises a combination of both global and local influences on the process of change. This means that for FLT innovation in Ukrainian schools to be successful, it needs to be contextualized and built upon local elements. The ways this might be achieved are discussed further in Sections 9.2.2 and 9.2.3 below.
This study also revealed that transformation processes in Ukrainian FLT do not develop equally across the entire public education sector. For example, the level of flexibility varies between schools that offer general comprehensive education and those that specialise in FLs, and between village schools that seem to enjoy less support compared to the opportunities available in schools located in urban areas.

It was not surprising to find that the most change was happening in those classrooms located in schools where ample support was available. This support came not only from governmental bodies, but also from school administrations and from parents. This illustrates how both bottom-up and top-down support combines in ways that enable successful change, as described by Fullan (2003a), Hyland and Wong (2013), Van den Branden (2009), and White (1988). Further, the level of access to training was also found to differ depending on the school: some teachers enjoy support from their administration for professional development, whilst others do not. This explains why, although current policies indicate professional development of the teachers is a priority in Ukraine, there is evidence that only limited training and resources are provided by the government (Kutsyuruba, 2011).

Based on this evidence, there appears to be a range of contexts with various degrees of change capacity within Ukrainian FLT. Schools which allow more hours for FL teaching and where there is more support for teachers can potentially be a good ground for trialling and adjusting tasks and teaching materials, as well as training teachers and students in new approaches. Further, as the participants in this study reported, when success is achieved the dissemination of ideas is possible through formal and informal teacher networks (such as lesson visits to colleagues within the same school and in other schools). In this way, there is potential for change to occur on a larger scale and to be done so ecologically – as an alternative to the centralized change which is the usual (post)Soviet practice.

Another key finding of this research relates to the low degree of convergence between the official version of FLT and actual practices. In terms of current policies, which in turn reflect transformation, and Europeanization in particular, the FLT curriculum in Ukraine has experienced a significant shift away from grammar-translation to communicative teaching. This was clearly identified in the documents.
examined and was reported by the practitioners to be a key goal of FLT in Ukraine. Nowadays teachers are encouraged to focus on the development of communicative competence, to introduce language items in context and to use pair and group work, which is in line with the principles of communicative teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). In reality, however, the FL practices observed in Ukrainian schools appeared to reflect a combination of three approaches: mainly audio-lingual, combined with some aspects of grammar-translation and a weak CLT (as described in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Such a mismatch between policy and practice is not uncommon as demonstrated by empirical studies and described throughout the literature on educational change (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Butler, 2011; Fullan, 2003a; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Kennedy, 2013; Markee, 1997; Yan & He, 2012; Zhang & Hu, 2010). One explanation for this may be that the economic and political hardships the country is experiencing inevitably also influence education. Indeed, Kutsyuruba (2011) found that Ukrainian teachers in his study perceived economic and political struggles to significantly undermine educational reform. Findings of the current study also suggest that under-resourcing, limited flexibility (especially in terms of time constraints), and limited access to the international documents that are at the foundation of the FLT reform are potentially restricting curriculum change. (These are discussed in detail in Section 9.4 below).

In the present study, the gap between policy and practice is further compounded by the fact that the practitioners seemed not used to being seen as key stakeholders or even having their voices heard. This was highlighted in their responses: when asked about FLT in Ukraine, they suggested that the policies and teacher education textbooks would provide the researcher with sufficient information. Thus, to the participants, the “official” discourse is seen as the most accurate representation of the reality. In these circumstances, exploratory studies such as the current one can facilitate a more holistic understanding of the local context, and provide one of the few ways local practitioners in centralized societies, such as Ukraine, can engage in discussion about pedagogical change.
9.2.2. Contextualizing change in post-Soviet FLT

It is crucial that any changes proposed for a particular context, and especially in the case of general education, reflect the expectations of the host institution (here the educational system) and society (Holliday, 1994a; Munby, 1978). In the current context these expectations include the multiple goals of FLT, its focus on culture, and the existing structured environment. This section discusses the implications of these in relation to contextualizing change in post-Soviet schools.

Multiple goals

The school curriculum in Ukraine sets a number of goals to be achieved in every subject area. The stated outcomes for FLT in Ukrainian schools are: the development of communicative competence, understanding of the language system, general learning skills and strategies, student intellectual and aesthetic development, moral education, and the development of their worldview. Interestingly, similar expectations exist for FLT in China, as exemplified by a student in Gong and Holliday’s (2013) study who explained he wanted his FL course to provide “something deeper, underlying the surface of life, sophisticated with philosophy” (p. 49). Similar cross-curricular goals have also been recently integrated into FLT in Canadian schools (Dunn, 2015), including development of critical thinking, cooperation, creativity, and information management.

In his discussion of the potential of TBLT tasks to meet such needs (as outlined above), Dunn (2015) indicates that some tasks are more appropriate for achieving this than others. For instance, such simple tasks as guessing a person from a list might not provide opportunities to include aims other than the development of language skills, while more complex tasks such as producing a ‘fotonovela’ can accommodate creativity, imagination, cultural understanding, and other goals. In McDonough and Chaikitmongkol’s (2007) study of a TBLT course in Thai university, students reported that the set tasks helped them develop their thinking, problem-solving, planning and self-monitoring skills (components of strategic competence as outlined in the Ukrainian curriculum). Further, Legutke and Thomas
(1991) provide examples of tasks that can facilitate “creation of a positive learning climate” (p. 75), namely through completing questionnaires, interviewing peers, writing biographies, and creating group profiles; problem-solving tasks (e.g., designing a puzzle following an outline) that aim to develop students’ thinking strategies; and tasks that can stimulate creativity (e.g., an imagination gap activity where students have to contextualize the sentence using their imagination) – all goals similar to those outlined in the Ukrainian curriculum. Other task examples can potentially also target memory development (e.g., a task requiring students to memorize a picture before they describe it to their peers) and aesthetic development (e.g., a task requiring students to assemble a poem). These examples suggest how TBLT tasks can be created in ways that are context-appropriate for Ukrainian FLT. As a cautionary note, however, research in this area is still very limited and further studies are needed to examine how tasks can be used to address broader educational goals.

**Focus on culture**

Based on the goals of the curriculum it is expected that FL lessons in Ukrainian schools will help students learn about the culture related to the target language, develop global values, and increase awareness of their own cultural identity. Therefore, any prospective innovation in Ukrainian FLT should provide local teachers with the ability to incorporate a focus on culture. The goal of teaching culture alongside language is currently pursued in a variety of international settings (e.g., see East, 2012a, 2012b in New Zealand; Gong & Holliday, 2013 in China; Newton, 2009 in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand). However, in many language courses worldwide, and in communicative teaching in particular, culture is often viewed simply as “an addendum which focuses on ‘learning facts about the target country’” (East, 2012a, p. 57). By contrast, an approach called intercultural teaching “treats culture learning as an integral part of all language learning” (Newton, 2009, p. 2). It prompts students to contemplate their own cultural background and identity, and facilitates a better understanding of other cultures (Newton, 2009). This view is reflective of that promoted in the FLT curriculum of Ukraine.
There is some evidence suggesting that tasks can integrate the type of intercultural teaching expected in Ukraine. For instance, Candlin (2009, p. 33) argues that tasks can provide opportunities to raise learner awareness about their own personalities as well as the social roles they take on because they “make us focus on how language is used to reflect and reinforce our value and belief systems” and “how we and others go about communicating and learning.” East (2012b) suggests the incorporation of a pedagogic framework described by Liddicoat (2005) as one way to implement intercultural teaching. This framework prescribes the use of authentic material to first draw learners’ attention to cross-cultural comparisons and then to apply this new knowledge when acting out “being a native speaker” (Liddicoat, 2005, as cited in East, 2012b, p. 143). Following this is the reflection by learners on their experiences and feelings. East (2012b) also suggests that this approach to cultural learning is similar to the task cycle described by Willis (1996; 2004) and, therefore, can be integrated into a TBLT approach. Specific types of tasks that can be used to develop cross-cultural awareness and positive attitudes to cultural differences are also provided by East (2012b) in his overview of a number of research studies. These include discussions, simulation and role plays, problem-solving and decision-making tasks, the use of Internet communication between students from different countries, and ethnographic research tasks. Importantly, these examples allow students to both learn about other cultures and develop an awareness of their own, which is seen as essential in the current Ukrainian school curriculum.

*Structured environment*

The findings of the current study suggest that in order for an innovation to be contextually appropriate in post-Soviet schools it should fit within the highly structured environment and allow for the syllabus to be completed on time. In particular, the design of resources and activities should allow local practitioners to start and finish the activity within the designated timeframe (30 to 45 minutes depending on the age group), leaving enough time for the other essential components of the lesson to be done, such as work with the textbook, reviewing homework, and marking. Carless (2007) reports similar constraints for secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. His study revealed “a stated priority of completing the assigned
textbook” and that “task-based activities were often interpreted as time-consuming and so not easy to fit into the teaching schedule” (p. 600). Nevertheless, a teacher in Carless’s (2007) study who felt positive about the use of tasks did introduce them along with her traditional teaching. This might mean that if Ukrainian teachers are to use tasks, an important first step will be to implement measures that enable them to develop positive attitudes. Doing so will encourage them to more willingly include tasks with their tight syllabus schedule.

Thai university teachers in McDonough and Chaikitmongkol’s (2007) study also reported concerns about their ability to use all the task activities given their tight schedule and the need to finish the class on time. To address this, the number of activities per lesson was reduced. While this was possible in a university course which can be more easily modified, this may prove challenging in government schools where all students are expected to learn the syllabus regardless of whether their teacher decides to use tasks or not. In this case, either the syllabus will need to change or tasks will need to be modified so that they can fit within the timetable. Although this might seem to impact on the integrity of tasks, especially within the parameters of TBLT, it may be possible because, as Candlin (2009) states, tasks can be “structured.” As he argues, good tasks should be “gradable, variable, orderable, organized for learners’ time, place and availability” (p. 25). Further, as Willis (2009) suggests, one role of a teacher is to monitor task performance, which includes time keeping. If these aspects of tasks are emphasized when presented to Ukrainian teachers, and both teachers and policy makers understand how tasks can be designed in a “structured” way, it is more likely that these practitioners will develop positive attitudes to this innovation which is an important pre-requisite for a successful change (as described above).

Finally, it is important to meet the expectations of the teachers, students and parents, specifically that every lesson should produce tangible results that can be assessed to demonstrate student progress. This means that a prospective change should ensure clear and immediately assessable outcomes. In terms of the outcomes that justify the effort, Candlin (2009, p. 26) argues that good tasks “should offer a high return on investment.” Within the framework of task-based assessment, Long and Norris
(2009) suggest developing a set of rating criteria to evaluate the performance of a task and its completion. These are then measured against “real-world criteria” (p. 140) which is very different from the language criteria used by local Ukrainian teachers. As the current findings show, the only teacher in this study who included activities with a non-linguistic outcome in her lessons (Case Study 2 Chapter 8) reported difficulties assessing this type of work. Clearly, this is another area where more research is needed.

9.2.3. TBLT components in the current FLT in Ukraine

It is argued that teachers are more likely to adopt an innovation if to do so does not require significant changes to their usual routine (Cohen & Ball, 2007). That is, implementation is more likely to be successful if it can “build on” and “extend” existing practices (Waters & Vilches, 2013, p. 65), rather than if it is significantly different from what teachers usually do. Although the current FLT curriculum in Ukraine does not include TBLT tasks, and the practitioners hold little knowledge about these, some elements of this approach were found in the local curriculum and in some of the observed practices. These include aspects of needs analysis (Long, 2005b, 2015; Nunan, 2004) and meaning-focused activities (focus on meaning as described in Ellis, 2009a; Long, 2015; Skehan, 1998). Even though these practices were not widespread and somewhat limited (e.g., because of time restrictions, resource availability and the need to follow a centrally prescribed syllabus as described above), this does suggest that such practices are possible in the Ukrainian FLT context. In addition, the existing processes of transformation, and in particular Europeanization of the educational system, seem to provide favourable environment for experimentation with tasks and TBLT more generally.

To start with, the participants in this study made attempts to tailor their teaching to accommodate the different needs of their students and various cohorts they teach. This is akin to what Long (2015, p. 88) calls “recognizing individual and group differences,” which he argues should go hand-in-hand with needs analysis.

Moreover, the participants appeared to be aware of the expectations of FLT held by the community. These findings appear to challenge the argument by Seedhouse
(1995) that needs analysis does not take place in General English classrooms. In this study, although teachers did not employ any surveys or questionnaires, they appeared to be well aware of their students’ interests, were attentive to their comments and requests, and made efforts to accommodate these. They also appeared to be aware of the different dynamics of the various classes in the same age-group they teach and its influence on the process of language learning (Nunan, 1995), and approached lesson planning accordingly. Therefore, even though the curriculum in Ukraine is developed and prescribed centrally, some information about student needs does exist, and this can be used as initial input into task design as required within a TBLT approach (Long, 2005b, 2015; Nunan, 2004).

Further, it was found that in order to engage their students in meaningful language use, some Ukrainian teachers utilize warm-ups at the start of each lesson, language contextualization during the lesson, and projects at the end of a lesson sequence on a particular topic. These practices can be potentially used as a foundation for different stages of task activity. For instance, Latif and Shaﬁpoor (2015) found that language instructors in an Iranian university used a pre-task phase as a warm-up at the beginning of the lesson. In a similar way, starting with a meaningful interaction and proceeding with language contextualization might assist Ukrainian teachers to achieve both a focus on meaning and on form throughout their lessons, reflecting one type of a task cycle (i.e., Willis, 2004). With regard to the use of project work, such activities closely resemble TBLT information-gap tasks as per Ellis (2003). In fact, according to Skehan (1998, p. 276), project work and content-based instruction can be seen as “particular pedagogic manifestations of a task-based approach.” Although such FLT projects were found not to be utilized on a regular basis in Ukrainian classrooms, and mainly took place at home where students may have access to additional material, this experience means that both teachers and students are already familiar with task work. On this basis, these practices may be able to serve as a starting point for the teachers to experiment with the task cycle. For example, they may be able to extend a warm-up stage into a full task cycle within a lesson, or have the student shift from doing their project work at home into the classroom.
Further potential may come about through the Europeanization evident in the Ukrainian FLT curriculum, which is in line with what Fimyar (2010, p. 80) calls “catching up with Europe and the World.” As a part of this process, the national FLT syllabus follows the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), a document promoting the use of pedagogic tasks in FLT. Although tasks have not been incorporated into the Ukrainian curriculum, local policy makers do have an understanding about this key international policy and its requirements. This may serve as a starting point for the discussion about including TBLT and tasks in the local curriculum. Moreover, as it was found that local practitioners are willing to learn from the outside and the West in particular, and some Ukrainian students now participate in international FL competitions and student exchange programs, this point of time is perhaps highly suitable for the introduction of such an innovation.

9.2.4. Locally identified need for change

According to Fullan (2003a, p. 8), for educational change to be successful, it should address “an existing or potential need.” By responding to the needs and wants of local people it is possible to develop an ecological or locally sensitive model of the curriculum (Kennedy, 2013, p. 21). This is especially pertinent within post-communist countries where Western ideas about what needs to be changed and how educational change should develop can differ significantly from local ideas and desires (Bain, 2010, pp. 37-38; Perry, 2005). By undertaking the current research in collaboration with local practitioners it was possible to identify a number of needs, gaps and wants in FLT in Ukraine.

Many participants in Phase 1 of the study indicated their desire to help learners overcome the fear of speaking in a FL and to develop their communicative competence. At the same time, the participants appeared to experience difficulties in reconciling meaningful communication with explicit grammar instruction, and how to develop lessons more reflective of real life. They also indicated that they did not feel their current efforts to achieve the desirable level of cultural learning were sufficient. In addition, they described how they wanted to incorporate approaches and materials that would motivate and engage their students, reporting a lack of
appropriate resources and especially technology in their lessons. There was also a desire to make changes to teacher and student roles, especially in relation to becoming facilitators rather than knowledge transmitters and having students engage more successfully with collaborative peer interaction. Finally, teachers reported the need for more flexibility and choice.

The following section addresses each of these areas in detail focusing on how TBLT tasks can potentially meet these locally identified needs and facilitate the changes suggested by the local practitioners.

9.3. Potential benefits of TBLT for post-Soviet schools: Addressing the needs

It has been suggested that teachers are likely to be more inclined to engage in innovation if they believe that it will bring about improvement and that the benefits will outweigh the drawbacks (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Yan & He, 2012). If there are clear benefits for them and their students, teachers might even “get involved in innovation which results in considerable work for them” (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 175). In her study in the US intensive ESL program, Stoller (1994) found that perceived usefulness was one of the key features facilitative of change implementation, as was the ability to overcome perceived difficulties with the previous way of teaching. Clearly, benefits need to be communicated to teachers in order to encourage them to endorse change (McAllister et al., 2012).

Based on the findings of this study, TBLT may potentially provide benefits for Ukrainian schools, including in the development of communicative competence, making connections to real-life situations, creating a more learner-centred classroom, facilitating student-student cooperation, improving student motivation and engagement, and enabling a higher level of flexibility through an increased choice in the local FLT.

9.3.1. Communicative competence

As described in Section 9.2.1 above, the findings of this study indicate that while communicative teaching and the development of FL communicative competence are
prescribed in the Ukrainian FLT curriculum and were reported to be a desired outcome by practitioners, there appeared to be very little genuine communication happening in FL classrooms. As the literature indicates, TBLT is an effective way to develop communicative competence (Adams & Newton, 2009), and was in fact designed to achieve a “greater emphasis on communicative activities in language teaching” than CLT (P. Robinson, 2011, p. 4). This is because tasks provide “an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language” (Nunan, 2004, p. 1). TBLT also encourages interaction by encouraging pair and group work, which gives students the chance to spend more time interacting in a FL during the lesson (Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 2009, p. 189). For example, teachers in a French university reported that small-group work within a task-based course helped their students develop confidence in speaking (McAllister et al., 2012). Therefore, the introduction of tasks and a TBLT approach in Ukrainian FLT may potentially address the communicative needs of the learners in this context.

From the data of the current study it was also clear that, at least in the perception of the practitioners, explicit language knowledge is a necessary foundation for the ability to express meaning. These perceptions closely resemble those reported in studies undertaken in other FLT contexts (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Rashtchi & Keyvanfar, 2012). However, it seems to be difficult for the participants to strike a balance between developing the linguistic component of communicative competence through explicit teaching of grammar and developing other components of this competence related to the meaningful use of language (as specified in Section 5.2.1). A TBLT approach may serve to address this difficulty as it does allow for the integration of these components. Although meaning is emphasized over form, learning language form is also possible (Ellis, 2009a), and can be achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, TBLT allows for a focus on form (FonF) in the course of making meaning (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long & Norris, 2009), the use of language exercises at various points of the task cycle (Skehan, 1996a; Willis, 2009), task repetition (Kotaka, 2013), and different ways of combining a task-based syllabus with a linguistic one (Ellis, 2009a; Ellis & Shintani, 2013) (for details, see Literature Review Section 3.2.4). Secondly, the use of certain task types, namely input-based tasks, focused tasks, and shared information tasks can draw students’ attention to
There is, therefore, a wide range of options for the Ukrainian FL educators to choose from. At the same time, Carless (2007) recommends the use of weak TBLT as a way to cater for teachers’ preference to use explicit language instruction in the context of schooling. In line with these views, the participants in Phase 2 of this study also suggested that tasks, if implemented in Ukraine, should be used alongside other activities rather than as a substitute to these. Therefore, task-supported teaching might be a better option for Ukrainian schools than a strong version of TBLT (see Literature review Section 3.2.4).

Further, to achieve “language knowledge,” the participants in this study wanted access to materials and approaches that would facilitate language recycling and reinforcement. Nunan (2004) describes language recycling as one of the principles of TBLT on the basis that learners are not expected to master the new language to perfection when they are first exposed to it, rather they need to encounter these language forms in various situations. Task repetition also provides an opportunity to improve learners’ performance as they work with the same language again and again (Kotaka, 2013). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) suggest that tasks can be used as a follow-up activity to enhance previously obtained language knowledge. In this way, TBLT can both fulfil a communicative function and provide multiple opportunities for the development of communicative competence, including through explicit language knowledge, and re-introduce new language items as desired by the practitioners in Ukraine.

9.3.2. Connection to real life

One of the key aims of the current Ukrainian FLT is to make language teaching more connected to the real world outside the classroom. While the teachers observed in the study made efforts to achieve this goal, these attempts were rare with most activities having very little resemblance to real life, for instance, dictation, choral repetition, learning dialogues by heart and text translation. To this end, TBLT can potentially address this gap as it is believed to facilitate “natural” and “real-world” learning (Ellis, 2009a, p. 242; Skehan, 1998, p. 268), integrate students’ life experiences and
use authentic materials (Nunan, 2004) in the lesson. This relationship to the life outside the classroom can be achieved through the design of pedagogical tasks based on the real tasks identified through needs analysis (NA) (Long, 2015; also see Literature Review Sections 3.2.3 and 3.4).

While it might be hard to achieve situational authenticity in the classroom (i.e., use only those tasks that fully reproduce real-life situations), interactional authenticity is arguably achieved by involving “the same kind of interactional processes (such as the negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, inferencing, and monitoring) that arise in naturally occurring language use” (Ellis, 2009a, p. 227). As Van den Branden (2006) explains, language proficiency is fundamental for many activities in one’s everyday routine and, therefore, developing this through the use of tasks may facilitate participation in a variety of real-life goals. By engaging students in genuine communication, tasks can also achieve learner authenticity (Nunan, 1988, as cited in Seedhouse, 1995, p. 62). Hence, TBLT may be utilized to enable more authentic FL use in Ukrainian schools. At present, a number of the participants reported spending time searching for authentic materials on the World Wide Web and creating activities based on these to engage their students. In order to support teachers, therefore, a pool of tasks could be created for them to choose from and to modify according to their learners’ needs and interests.

9.3.3. Learner-centred classroom

The practitioners in this study expressed a desire to shift from an authoritarian teaching style to a situation where they can become facilitators in the classroom. However, although the majority of the participants appeared to acknowledge their students’ interests, and communicative activities were employed in some classrooms, at present FLT lessons in Ukraine are largely teacher-centred. This is similar to the situation reported from Hong Kong where the teacher “orchestrates, but a concern for students and their needs is at the forefront” (Carless & Harfitt, 2013, p. 175).

It has been stated that TBLT can accommodate both a learner-centred approach and “teacher input and direction” (Ellis, 2009a, p. 242). As Willis (2004) suggests,
teachers are expected to change roles during the task cycle, allowing students to work independently at some points. In other words, it provides opportunities for the teacher to step aside from an authoritarian teaching style and develop more egalitarian teacher-student relationships (Long, 2015). Examples of how teachers have moved towards learner-centeredness in TBLT courses have been described in a number of studies (e.g., McAllister et al., 2012; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Murakami, Valvona & Broudi, 2012; Van Avermaet et al., 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007). Therefore, adopting TBLT might help Ukrainian practitioners to move in this direction.

9.3.4. Student-student cooperation

While the participants in this study expressed a desire to see their students more active in the lesson, little peer interaction was observed in the lessons. Indeed, on the rare occasions when teachers organized group work, with the exception of the Case Study 2 (Chapter 8), the students were not expected to cooperate and did not use English when discussion did occur.

Although Ellis (2009a) posits that group and pair work is not a “must-do” practice in TBLT, tasks can be used to facilitate interaction and cooperation between students. Some examples of tasks that can be used to achieve this include information-gap tasks (Ellis, 2003) where students have to cooperate in order to complete the task and cannot achieve the required outcome otherwise. Notably, the participants in this study appeared to be unaware of the function of the gap to prompt the use of a FL in interaction. In fact, throughout the entire study only one participant was observed using information-gap-type activities (see Case Study 2 in Chapter 8). However, even this teacher was not aware of the function of the gap – she explained she used those because they resembled real-life activities that students do in their own language. Another participant described an example of a picture description activity she uses and that in her perception was task-like – and this potentially includes a gap as only one student sees the picture and has to describe it to the whole class so they can draw it. However, as the teacher pointed out herself, the students do not need to interact to complete this activity.
Another benefit of pair and group work is that it provides opportunities for students to learn from each other (e.g., Long, 2015). However, as Long (2015) notes, culturally students might not be used to learning from their peers, but instead they would see the teacher as the source of knowledge in a lesson. This was evident in the current research where, although peer scaffolding was observed occurring in two lessons (for an example see Case Study 2 Chapter 8), facilitating such opportunities was not observed to be intentionally organized. Therefore, it does seem that the use of tasks in Ukraine may not only facilitate students’ learning, but also serve to increase teachers’ awareness about the function of information-gap tasks and a possibility of students to learn from their peers (as per Ellis, 2009a).

9.3.5. Motivation and engagement

One of the key goals of the Ukrainian FLT curriculum is to motivate students to learn a FL. The participants expressed their belief that when students are motivated, then they will engage. This belief is in line with the research in educational psychology showing that engagement is a prerequisite for learning to occur. It is also seen as an essential condition for language processing during task performance (Dörnyei, 2009).

There are several ways TBLT can be used to motivate students. To begin with, tasks are believed to provide intrinsic motivation for learners such as through the creation of a gap that necessitates student interaction (Ellis, 2009b) – as described above. Further, Dörnyei (2009, p. 359) suggests that tasks motivate students “both by generalised, task-independent factors (e.g., overall interest in the subject matter) and situational-specific, task-dependent factors (e.g., the challenging nature of the task).” Indeed, a number of studies have reported an increase in learner motivation, confidence, and enjoyment of language learning (e.g., Bao & Du, 2015; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007) as a result of undertaking a TBLT course. The participants in the current study who attended the researcher’s presentation (see Chapter 7) also indicated that they felt tasks could motivate and engage their students (such as through the use of bright visuals and a detective story).
The participants also described how the use of tasks could potentially motivate their students by being new and unusual as they differ from the exercises and other activities that are currently being used. Moreover, this would fit within the practices of the local practitioners where a variety of activities occur in each lesson, as this is seen to promote student attention and interest. Thus, it does seem that task implementation in Ukraine has the potential to increase student motivation and engagement in FL learning.

9.3.6. Flexibility and choice

Although the Ukrainian curriculum and textbooks are centrally prescribed, the findings of this study indicate that there are some opportunities for flexibility and choice both at the level of the curriculum and at the level of the classroom. The teachers expressed their desire to have even more options to choose from in preparation for their lessons to enable them to develop materials that would better suit their students. In addition, the teachers also wanted their students to be able to move around the classroom more despite the restrictions of the classroom facilities.

If TBLT tasks are implemented in this context, this may increase the level of choice available within a lesson, including using alternative approaches to FLT. It may also allow teachers to engage their students in a variety of modes (Wright, 1987), such as whole class, group work, pair work, with the opportunities for students to change their location. This may in turn support teachers’ creativity by providing the opportunities to experiment, and as Anchan (2003, p. xv) suggested, “the freedom to experiment bestows the reality of empowerment.” Hence, the introduction of TBLT might be facilitative of the processes of decentralization and democratization of education in general.

9.4. Potential challenges for TBLT in post-Soviet schools

Despite the various potential benefits of TBLT for Ukrainian schools, a number of challenges are also apparent. These challenges have been identified based on the data collected in this study, including the participants’ comments made after the TBLT
presentation. In particular, this section looks at the terminological and conceptual differences between the local and international professional discourse, the perceived importance of explicit and rigorous language knowledge, and the challenges related to mixed-ability classrooms, classroom management, and under-resourcing.

### 9.4.1. Terminological and conceptual differences

In this study, a considerable mismatch was found in the terminology and conceptualization of FLT between the international professional discourse and that currently used in Ukraine. For example, there was a lack of awareness among the participants about analytic and synthetic approaches to FLT, and in particular the alternatives to the PPP model, about the concepts of form, forms and meaning, and the differences between the terms task and exercise were not well understood.

This mismatch can potentially create significant challenges for the implementation of an innovation such as TBLT. Firstly, from the teachers’ responses to the presentation about TBLT it was apparent that they lacked a theoretical background about some areas of FLT. For example, it seemed that the participants’ ideas and perceptions about a TBLT approach directly connected to the sample tasks provided in the presentation, rather than to the rationale behind this approach that was also provided. In particular, the participants suggested that tasks are suitable only for primary school students, only for high-proficiency students, or only for the students in SL contexts – depending on the task examples they were given. This means that examples and the explanation of an innovation need to be contextualized at the stage of teacher training. Further, similarly to the findings of the post-implementational studies in a variety of other contexts (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Butler, 2011; Carless, 2004; Kollmann, 2005), Ukrainian teachers appeared to have developed misunderstandings about TBLT and these would need to be explicitly addressed.

Another important finding stems from the participants’ responses to the presentation. On the one hand, it appeared that some teachers were able to develop new ways of thinking about their practices based on this new information. For instance, in the focus group discussions teachers mentioned recycling of the students’ work for
language learning activities, students acquiring language at different pace and initiating interaction – all aspects that existed in the videos used in the presentation, but not commonly occurring in the local FLT. Moreover, the teachers discussed how such an approach can be potentially useful in their classrooms. In this case, it appears that even short exposure to a new idea might trigger the type of thinking and the development of ideas that go beyond the current professional discourse in the given context. On the other hand, this responsiveness to the new ideas seemed to depend on how easily it was possible to observe these things: more subtle and theoretical aspects that were included in the presentation, but that could not be observed immediately in the video (e.g., the difference between TBLT and PPP model), were less likely to stimulate teacher responses.

This observation is especially significant given that, according to Hyland and Wong (2013), even when teachers receive support from above to implement an innovation, if they have not fully understood and committed to the underpinning concepts of this innovation, it will be less likely to succeed. Ellis (2009a) argues that teachers’ knowledge about TBLT and the principles it is based on, such as differences between form and meaning, as well as analytic and synthetic approaches, is essential for its success. Indeed, empirical studies suggest that without such knowledge, teachers prefer to continue with their previous practices (e.g., Carless, 2009; Lopes, 2004). This is because, as Freeman (2013, p. 126) argues, “changes in behaviour must also entail changes in thinking.” In other words, what will happen in the classroom will depend on teachers’ thinking and their making sense of new ideas. To this end, even when Ukrainian teachers are motivated to try tasks, the lack of theoretical knowledge may inhibit the success of the innovation in the long-term.

Finally, it was found in this study that some of the concepts that existed in the local FLT had different meanings from those of international discourse. For instance, for some of the participants in this study the term “group work” was associated with the location of the students rather than with the necessity to cooperate, while in the international literature group work is conceptualized as a learning mode requiring student cooperation (e.g., Flowerdew, 1998) and communication (e.g., Fushino, 2010). There is a risk, therefore, that even when the same terms are used, the
misunderstandings between local and foreign educators can remain (Bain, 2010). This is not surprising in the target context given that the teacher participants mostly work with local policies rather than international ones (such as the CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). Fullan (2003b, p. 115) posits that “any strategy for reform must establish processes for generating and accessing knowledge and best practices.” If the teachers are not provided with such input, there is a risk of TBLT becoming just one more innovation that does not lead to change in actual teaching.

9.4.2. Explicit and rigorous language knowledge

It was discussed in Section 9.3.1 how tasks can provide an opportunity for students to focus on form. However, it is not always easy to make a clear distinction between the PPP and the task-supported version of TBLT that allows for explicit teaching of language forms (Carless, 2009). Unless teachers receive instruction about the philosophical and theoretical underpinning of the two approaches, they may be puzzled and uncertain about how to implement this in their classrooms. In turn, this might lead to a superficial adoption of a weak form of TBLT as has been reported in other contexts (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Butler, 2011; Kollmann, 2005). To avoid confusion, teacher training should include making the distinction clear by describing the underlying principles of both approaches.

Another challenge was suggested by the teachers in Phase 2 of the study who expressed their concerns that students doing tasks did not seem to learn a lot of language, and therefore, in their opinion, much of the lesson time was wasted. Their understanding seemed to be that without sufficient input such as they believe occurs in PPP, the learners’ language will be too simplistic and no learning will happen. Similar concerns have been expressed by teachers (Zheng & Borg, 2014) and students (Lopes, 2004) in other studies. Ellis (2009a) addresses this issue as a misconception. He argues that in cases when the learners’ FL proficiency is low, the need to complete the task using their own resources in fact facilitates the development of strategic competence and “collaborative knowledge building” (p. 229). He also notes how raising the complexity of the task will lead to more complex language being used by the students. Lopes (2004) describes how task repetition and
having students record the language they work with can also be used to overcome these misconceptions. Again, teacher training needs to include explicit direction about these possibilities. Teachers will also require instruction about the ways tasks can be designed to achieve greater language complexity.

Interestingly, examinations did not appear to have as strong an impact on teachers’ response to TBLT in Ukraine as has been reported in many Asian countries (e.g., Adams & Newton, 2009; Butler, 2011; Carless, 2007; Zheng & Borg, 2014). In these contexts, forms-focused evaluation was found to have a strong backwash effect with teachers giving preference to forms-focused instruction as a way to prepare their students for exams. Although participants in this study mentioned preparing students for testing and especially for the Independent Testing of the graduates, they still appeared willing to develop communicative practices. Furthermore, it was indicated that the centralized testing in Ukraine will soon be changed and made more communicative. This observation means that while some challenges can prove crucial for task use in some contexts, in other settings they might not constitute a serious barrier to implementation. To that end, a pre-implementational exploratory study such as the current one enables not only exploration of the context, but also avoidance of stereotypes.

9.4.3. Low-proficiency students and mixed-ability classrooms

The current section examines possible challenges for Ukrainian schools posed by student interaction within communicative teaching and TBLT in particular. In general, the participants seemed to hold a belief that students come to school as “empty vessels” to be filled. Therefore, they claimed, students cannot use a FL communicatively before they reach a sufficiently high level of proficiency. This is in stark contrast with communicative teaching which promotes learners as “above all, communicators” regardless of their language level (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 122). As a result of these perceptions, similarly to teachers in Zheng and Borg’s (2014) study in China, Ukrainian practitioners expressed concerns about the use of tasks in their mixed-ability classes. They indicated that “strong” students are reluctant to work with classmates whose FL proficiency is low, and low-proficiency
students tend to be passive during group work. These attitudes, therefore, can prevent teachers from implementing tasks in their classrooms.

According to Ellis (2009a), tasks have a potential to benefit all learners regardless of levels of proficiency. TBLT literature contains descriptions of tasks at various levels of difficulty, which is particularly relevant for Ukraine where many practitioners teach across age levels – in both primary and secondary schools. For instance, Duran and Ramaut (2006) and Van Gorp and Bogaert (2006) provide some examples of tasks for beginners. However, they base their discussion on a task-based curriculum developed for child migrants in Belgium which might not be the most appropriate for Ukrainian teachers given that the participants appeared to be sceptical about the applicability of the SL teaching approaches in their FL classrooms. Therefore, it may be useful to have available in teacher training examples of student interacting whilst doing tasks in FL settings. Ukrainian teachers would especially benefit from the examples where students are working on tasks in mixed-ability classrooms.

9.4.4. Classroom management

Teachers in this study also appeared to be concerned about the potential increase in noise levels and the overuse of L1 by their students when tasks are implemented. In the conditions of a structured environment (described in Section 9.2.2 above), Ukrainian FL lessons are expected to be disciplined and quiet. On the one hand, this is similar to Asian classrooms as outlined in Adams and Newton (2009). On the other hand, teachers in Carless’ (2002) and Zheng and Borg’s (2014) studies revealed different levels of noise tolerance, with the teacher who was more dedicated to a CLT approach allowing more interaction and noise than the two others. Given that the teachers in the present study seemed to be invested in communicative teaching, this might help them overcome their initial frustration related to changes associated with task implementation. However, in the school environment it is not only the teacher who expects certain levels of discipline, but also their colleagues (e.g., teachers in the classrooms next door). Therefore, without classroom management strategies accompanying task performance, it might be challenging to achieve widespread uptake of TBLT in Ukrainian schools.
On this basis, the choice of tasks should be strategic. For instance, there is a need to address the potential pitfalls outlined by Carless (2002): students receiving unclear instructions, tasks being either too easy or too difficult for the students, task design that requires more interaction, and mixed-ability classes where some students finish earlier than others. Carless further suggests communicating the purpose of the pair and group work to the learners, appointing group monitors, and implementing a system of noise level control by reminding students to stay disciplined and by providing rewards for desirable behaviour. Having teachers aware of such strategies at the outset may increase the potential of successful implementation.

The participants of this study also appeared to be reluctant to give their students more freedom in pair or group interaction as they indicated they were worried about the overuse of L1. Indeed, it was observed during the lessons that students tend to switch to their L1 if the teacher is far away enough not to hear them properly. Switching to their L1 for a meaningful conversation during the lesson was also reported by Ilin et al. (2007) in their study of primary school children in Turkey. One reason for this is that, according to Rosa (2004), students may find it hard to understand the need to communicate in another language if they can use their L1 to effectively express themselves in their monolingual group.

Such negative attitudes to the use of L1 in FLT classrooms are, however, being challenged in the current literature. It is argued that given these classrooms are bilingual settings (Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009), it would be unnatural to completely prohibit the use of any language (Cook, 2001). Research studies suggest that various aspects of FL acquisition are impacted by learners’ L1 (e.g., Spada & Lightbown, 1999; Zobl, 1995). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should explicitly instruct students about differences between the two. In addition, more recently the ability of L1 use to promote FL proficiency has also been recognized (e.g., Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Cook, 2001; Cummins, 1993; Nation, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). For instance, it was found that if students use their L1 when they are on task, it can help them to better understand and complete an activity (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). This is particularly relevant when an activity is cognitively challenging for learners (Nation, 2003). Further, having discussed the content in their
L1 first, students can then focus their attention on the use of a FL to achieve greater fluency in completing the activity. Learning about the ways L1 can facilitate FLT, therefore, might help overcome Ukrainian teachers’ current reluctance to allow student-student communication in the lesson.

Nevertheless, it is also recommended that overuse of the L1 in FL classrooms at the expense of the target language should be avoided (Nation, 2003). This means that some measures should be put in place to help teachers manage this aspect of their lessons effectively. While some suggestions are provided by Carless (2002), such as for the teacher to be a FL role model for students and letting students know that they are expected to decrease their L1 use, these are actually practices already in place in Ukraine. However, the effectiveness of these in the Ukrainian context did not appear to be strong as learners were observed switching back to L1 once the teacher moved away from their group. This means that more suitable strategies to manage their classrooms and monitor the use of L1 may need to be devised to assist the teachers in Ukraine if they are to increase their use of tasks.

### 9.4.5. Under-resourcing

Under-resourcing was reported by the participants as one of the key barriers to communicative practices and potentially to the implementation of TBLT. This was related to the lack of appropriate textbooks and computer technology, the lack of materials such as toys and other objects to use in creative activities, and the low income of educators that pushes teachers into getting extra jobs.

Although there is a lack of technology and teaching materials specifically tailored for communicative tasks, this should not pose a serious challenge for TBLT implementation. For instance, it has been argued that mainstream FL textbooks can be adapted for use as tasks (e.g., see Najjari, 2014; Wicking, 2009). In fact, additional resources are not crucial for the success of task implementation: in the five years of the Communicational Teaching Project in India, tasks were utilized with the help of “blackboard, chalk, paper, and pencil” (Prabhu, 1987, p. 5). At the same time, given that Ukrainian teachers provided favourable feedback about the visuals in the
tasks they observed in the presentation, sourcing them with those materials might significantly increase the likelihood of successful implementation.

Unfortunately, the low income and high workload of the FL teachers may prove to be a serious obstacle to task implementation. Currently teachers have to earn their living by taking on extra work and this decreases the time they have available for lesson preparation and professional development. This may restrict the chance they have to improve their teaching (Crookes, 1997). Further, as it was found in this study and in Kutsyuruba’s (2011) research, Ukrainian teachers are often asked to perform a number of functions at school in addition to their teaching role, as evident in Case Study 1 (Chapter 8). These workload issues might deter teachers from engaging in the innovation initiatives (Brandle, 2008; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; McAllister et al., 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Zhang, 2007), and be a serious challenge to the implementation of TBLT in the Ukrainian FLT context. It is essential that these issues are addressed because if teachers lack time to invest in change, the professional development initiatives suggested earlier in this chapter are not likely to bring about desirable outcomes.

9.5. Chapter summary

An investigation into the FLT context of public schools in Ukraine revealed that it is undergoing transformation and combines the existing or traditional elements with the new developments in the process of globalization and nation building. At the same time, opportunities and support structures vary across the public education sector in Ukraine. It was also revealed that there is a mismatch between the policies and practices in Ukrainian FLT.

Despite this context, it was found that some aspects of the current Ukrainian FLT can potentially serve as a foundation for TBLT implementation. These include Europeanization, needs analysis, and instances of a focus on meaning. The need for flexibility in terms of time and facilities, and top-down assistance experienced in some schools can also serve to support this innovation. Additionally, context-sensitive task design should enable incorporation of the multiple goals of the
curriculum, a focus on culture, and the realities of the structured environment. However, further research is still needed to find how these can be better accommodated within TBLT.

Six key benefits and five areas of potential challenge of TBLT implementation were identified in this study. The majority of these are similar to the ones reported from other FLT contexts, but some issues such as flexibility, systematic marking, and the need to control noise levels within the public school setting appear to not have been considered previously. While some of the concerns seem to be easily addressed using suggestions provided in the literature, others need further research to inform the development of appropriate measures.

The implications of these findings for theory and practice of FLT, especially for Ukraine, and for contextualizing educational innovation, as well as directions for further research are outlined in the next chapter.
Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1. Overview

The central tenet of this study is the need to develop more contextualized and hence more appropriate and effective ways to innovate in education, in this case in the FLT context of Ukraine. This need is underpinned by the modern realities of increased internationalization and globalization. While these processes allow pedagogical ideas to travel “across the borders,” creating a favourable condition for the exchange of best practices, there is also a risk that they will be imposed in a top-down manner without proper adjustment. As a result, no change of the actual practices may occur or they may even turn out to be detrimental rather than helpful for those who adopt them. It is suggested in this study that one way to address this issue is by contextualizing an innovation before it is implemented. To address this aim the current study used exploratory qualitative research informed by ethnographic traditions and innovation theory. In particular, it sought to provide a description of the current FLT in Ukrainian schools and identify the potential benefits and challenges of implementing TBLT.

The responses to the Research Questions of this study are summarised in the first section of this chapter. The limitations of the study are then outlined, and implications for pedagogy and educational change are explained. The chapter concludes with directions for further research.

10.2. Response to the Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following three Research Questions:

1) What are the current FLT curriculum and practices in schools in post-Soviet Ukraine?

Reflecting the discourse of globalization, FLT plays a key role in the Ukrainian school curriculum. Its main goal is the development of communicative competence. It also incorporates the goals of general development, character education, and
cultural awareness. To achieve these more effectively, large student groups are divided into smaller ones, and teaching is expected to cater for student interests and abilities, and reflect real-life language use. Teaching takes place in a structured environment with explicit requirements for lesson planning and timing. There is also an expectation for every lesson to produce tangible results that can be marked to indicate students’ progress.

The findings also suggest that there is a discrepancy between the “official” version of FLT and actual classroom practices, and these are demonstrated in three ways. First, the teaching was found to combine rare instances of communicative teaching with the extensive use of repetition, drilling, translation, and memorisation. Second, some changes such as the use of technology appear not to have altered the teaching approaches in any significant way, so it remains highly teacher-centred and based on knowledge transmission. Third, even though all schools participating in this study were public schools, they appeared to differ according to their type, location, and the support they received from the government, parents, and school administration. In particular, under-resourcing and inflexibility appear to considerably undermine teachers’ efforts to make their lessons more communicative and reflective of student needs. At the same time, the participants expressed a desire to see a number of changes in school FLT in Ukraine.

The reasons for these differences and the way they impact on the processes of transformation in this FLT context and TBLT contextualization in particular were discussed in the findings chapters. The implications this has for the management of innovation, FLT contexts, and post-Soviet schools in Ukraine in particular are provided in Section 10.4 below.

2) Are there potential benefits of implementing TBLT in school FLT contexts in Ukraine?

Six main ways TBLT can benefit the local FLT in Ukraine have been identified in this study. First, tasks can be utilized by Ukrainian teachers to facilitate the development of their students’ communicative competence – the main goal of the curriculum, and at the same time ensure sufficient attention is given to language
form. Next, tasks can potentially assist teachers in making stronger links to the world outside the classroom and to better incorporate their students’ real needs into their teaching. Tasks also may facilitate the movement towards more learner-centred teaching in Ukraine, and assist teachers in organising student-student cooperation. In addition, they can be used to raise teachers’ awareness about the use of an information gap to create the necessity for interaction, having a non-linguistic outcome to prompt attention to meaning, and about the possibility and value of students learning from each other. Finally, tasks can be utilized to increase student motivation and provide teachers with greater flexibility and choice of activities.

3) What challenges are associated with the prospective implementation of TBLT in Ukrainian schools?

The key challenge for the introduction of this innovation in the target context is the lack of knowledge about theoretical underpinning of current approaches to language teaching among the participants. This is exacerbated by the differences in terminology and conceptualization of FLT in Ukraine and as used in international discourse. Further, the participants expressed concerns about the possibility that tasks can be used to teach language of sufficient complexity. Their mixed-ability classes and low proficiency students were further concerns expressed by these participants. In addition, given that local FLT is structured and disciplined, it is also not clear how teachers can ensure effective time and classroom management when using tasks, and at the same time prevent overuse of L1. Finally, task implementation can be hindered by under-resourcing, especially evident in non-specialised schools, as well as by the high workload of teachers. The ways these issues can be addressed to minimise adverse effects were outlined in the Discussion Chapter. Section 10.4 below presents the implications for change management and pedagogy.

10.3. Limitations of the study

Although extensive and in-depth data collection and analysis were used to answer the Research Questions (as outlined above), the study has limitations. These stem from its conceptual focus and qualitative nature. To start with, the study focused on TBLT
as an example of educational innovation and one deemed particularly relevant for FLT in Ukraine. However, it does need to be acknowledged that as is the case of other teaching approaches, it has proponents and critics. Even so, it was not the purpose of this study to explicitly account for all existing criticisms of this approach (see Ellis, 2009a for a review), but rather the goal was to illustrate how research can inform educational innovation. Therefore, this study set out to explore whether TBLT (as a FLT innovation) can be of benefit for a particular context (i.e, Ukraine) and what challenges may occur if implementation is undertaken.

Secondly, while this study is concerned with contextualizing innovation by considering a variety of local factors and the perception of various stakeholders, it did not include learners as participants. The reasons for this included time restrictions for the project, ethical considerations (the need for additional approvals), and the fact that it would be difficult for school-age students to provide feedback on an approach that has not been employed (i.e., asking them to respond to an abstract and hypothetical situation). Instead, the main focus of the current study was on teachers and those involved in educational decision-making (i.e, teacher educators and policy makers). However, it should be noted that in some way student contribution into the study was indirectly obtained through their participation in the observed lessons.

Thirdly, the researcher being native to the field is a potential limitation. For example, it may have restricted the ability to notice the “usual” and “unusual” aspects of the local FLT situation to enable the essential thick description to be produced (Geertz, 1973; Holliday, 2010). This issue was addressed with the help of reflexivity as explained in the Literature Review (Section 3.4.4) and exemplified in the Method Chapter (Section 4.8). Further, the researcher’s insider position actually offered a number of advantages, such as shared language and culture with the participants, and an inherent understanding of the relevant issues mentioned in the policies and by the participants.

Lastly, the current study is qualitative and descriptive in nature and, therefore, it is not generalizable. It is not claimed that the study is representative of all Ukrainian or post-Soviet schools. Rather, as in qualitative research, it is admitted that knowledge is “partial, provisional and perspectival” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 416). As
stated, the study aimed to provide a thick description of the context and identify issues relevant to the ecological implementation of educational change. Nonetheless, the results of the study are potentially transferrable: such an in-depth focus as occurred in the current study may facilitate understanding of cultural patterns of behaviour (in this case, of educational change) in contexts that share a degree of similarity (Long, 1980). The results also have a number of important implications and these are discussed in the following section.

10.4. Implications of the study

This study has a number of implications for educational change and FLT pedagogy. This section begins with an explanation of how a pre-implementation approach might be a worthwhile way to contextualize educational innovation. It then describes the issues pertinent to TBLT implementation in FLT contexts, which is followed by more specific recommendations for post-Soviet FLT in Ukraine.

There are four main advantages of pre-implementation exploratory research for contextualizing educational innovation. First, instead of focusing on separate problems as might be the case after change has been implemented, it provides a comprehensive account of the current macro and micro contexts of FLT. This helps reveal the hidden aspects such as stereotypes of the “official” discourse. In this way, change can be tailored to target real needs and consider conditions of actual classrooms. Second, it enables the variety of micro contexts that exist in the target socio-cultural setting to be revealed. As illustrated by the three Case Studies in this thesis, these differences can impact significantly on the teachers’ capacity to undertake change. Third, pre-implementation research may enable a more timely response to the potential challenges of an innovation, especially given that the challenges identified here are similar to those reported in other studies conducted post implementation (e.g., Barnard & Nguyen, 2010; Brandle, 2008; Carless, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007; Ilin et al., 2007; Lopes, 2004; McAllister et al., 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Zhang, 2007; Rashtchi & Keyvanfar, 2012; Zheng & Borg, 2014). Thus, the approach applied in this research may decrease or even prevent some of
these. Overall, as Winston Churchill once said, “time spent on reconnaissance is never waisted” (Shaw, 2004, p. 63).

The implications for implementing TBLT in FL settings include the need to consider the contribution of the context, professional development, and additional support in making this change context-appropriate and potentially successful. Although the influence of the socio-cultural context on teachers’ perceptions and practices has already been described in the literature (e.g., Carless, 2004; Holliday, 1994b; Van Avermaet et al., 2006), the current study suggests that teachers can develop misunderstandings before they even engage with an innovation. This highlights the need for professional training prior to implementation in order to address potential pitfalls. Specifically, the findings point to the need not only to instruct teachers about TBLT, but familiarize them with the terminology and concepts used in the international FLT and SLA discourse. In order to do this, first it is essential to consider which terminology these teachers are familiar with and what meanings are assigned to the key concepts in the local FLT. Further, the new concepts should be presented, discussed and exemplified.

At the same time, it has also been argued that even when teachers are trained in TBLT, they still do not always utilize it in practice (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010). Previous research suggests positive attitudes towards innovation and motivation to implement it were found to be essential for change to take place (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Zheng & Borg, 2014). The findings from the current study suggest that providing examples from other FL contexts (in contrast to those used in SL settings) may lower teachers’ scepticism about the applicability of tasks in their classrooms. In addition, supporting measures such as instruction in strategies of classroom and time management for when there is increased communication, flexible timetable allowing for experimentation, and adequate resourcing may also encourage teachers to implement tasks. By doing this, teachers can be empowered to make pedagogically appropriate choices or adjustment innovations (i.e., TBLT) to suit their situation (Skehan, 1998; Ur, 2013).

Although pedagogy in the participating schools in the current study appeared to be mainly teacher-centered and discipline was an important part of the teaching routine,
it should be noted that practitioners reported they do want students to be more active, responsible for their learning, and to cooperate more. Furthermore, it was found that TBLT may motivate teachers to think beyond their existing practices and even contribute to the processes of decentralization and democratization in education and the country more generally. In this way, TBLT can be used as a mechanism of educational change in FLT context.

Importantly, the findings also highlight how every FLT context is different. For instance, exams or class sizes were found to not be as restrictive of communicative practices in Ukraine as in some other places. Likewise, the issues identified in this study may also be important (or not so) in other contexts. In turn this demonstrates the need for every context of implementation to be approached using a background study to determine the appropriate way an innovation, and in this case TBLT, can be contextualized.

Regarding the implications for the FLT in Ukrainian schools, these are related to the gap between policies and practices. The dialogue between FLT teachers and policy makers might help locate the reasons behind this. Participation in professional debate may positively contribute to their “sense of plausibility” that guides teachers’ decisions about what is appropriate (or not) for their classrooms (Prabhu, 1987, p. 107). In order to allow practitioners to have an informed and meaningful contribution into decision-making, they need to have access to the international documents and adequate professional development. In particular, teachers need a more explicit and fundamental theoretical knowledge about current research in FLT, as well as theories and philosophies underpinning different language teaching approaches. It would also be beneficial to have professional discussions about the role of students and teachers to help Ukrainian practitioners develop their own understandings. Similarly, the ways technology can contribute to teaching and make it more efficient need to be elaborated in this context. Lastly, Ukrainian teachers would also benefit from practical skills on how to manage communicative activities in the classroom.

On the other hand, under-resourcing and the lack of flexibility in Ukrainian schools can undermine the success of these endeavours. This is further exacerbated by uneven possibilities in different schools. If this is not addressed, introduction of an
innovation such as TBLT is likely to widen the gap that currently exists for different students, teachers and schools. In order to gain momentum for educational reform in Ukraine, it is essential that the government takes steps to address these issues. Such measures would allow for a combination of the bottom-up (i.e., teachers’ initiative) and top-down (government support) ways of change, which in turn is more likely to facilitate successful innovation (Bailey & Springer, 2013; Fullan, 2003a; Kennedy, 2013; Van den Branden, 2009; White, 1988; Yan & He, 2012; see Literature Review Section 3.3.2 for a detailed overview).

Finally, given that the present study identified a number of advantages TBLT can offer for this particular context, as well as its potential to address local needs and adjust to the key local features (such as focus on culture), the possibility of its implementation should be considered more closely. One caveat to this is that appropriate arrangements should also be made regarding the contextualization of tasks and narrowing the gap between policies and practices.

**10.5. Directions for further research**

The findings of this study suggest that in order to enable better contextualization of TBLT, more research is needed on how tasks can incorporate multiple cross-curricular goals and be adjusted in structured environments. In particular, such issues as time and class management in public school environments need to be addressed. Further, it is also not clear how teachers in centralized school systems like that of Ukraine can adequately assess tasks using centrally prescribed criteria. There is a need for documented examples of programs and individual tasks designed for different contexts and proficiency levels which could then be used for teacher training purposes.

As indicated above, the scope of the present study was limited to one area and only educational professionals were involved as participants. Therefore, studies of more schools in Ukraine might provide a better insight from different locations that follow the same curriculum. A study that investigates learner perceptions of educational change in the same setting, and possibly even that of their parents, would be useful to provide a more holistic picture of the needs and wants of the given context. Further, a
similar study in other post-Soviet countries might provide a better understanding of how common history of the regions influences the contextual features pertinent to an educational innovation.

In addition, this study can provide useful comparative data for existing research on TBLT implementation in other FLT contexts. Identification of similarities and differences may further our understanding of an interplay between TBLT implementation and socio-cultural features of the FLT. In particular, more studies are needed to investigate possibilities of undertaking a pre-implementational Means Analysis (MA).

Finally, it is strongly recommended that more research, and especially empirical research of qualitative nature takes place in contemporary Ukraine. This is crucial to help decision-making not to rely solely on the “official version” of FLT but to address real needs.

10.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has summarised answers to the three Research Questions and outlined the limitations of the current research. The implications were discussed in relation to the use of a pre-implementational study, contextualizing TBLT in FL contexts, and FLT policies and practices in Ukraine. It has been concluded that TBLT is an innovation that deserves attention from both teachers and policy makers as long as it is properly contextualized and potential challenges are addressed. Recommendations for professional development and for the further research have been given.
References


Bott, E. (2010). Favourites and others: Reflexivity and the shaping of subjectivities and data in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 10*, 159-173.


& O. García (Eds.), *Negotiating language policies in schools: Educators as policymakers* (pp. 123-142). New York: Routledge.


**Legislation**


MOES. (2012b). *Navchalni prohramy z inozemnyh mov (1-4 klasy)* [Educational program in foreign languages for primary school (years 1-4)]. Kyiv: Osvita.


MOES. (2013b). *Navchalni prohramy z inozemnyh mov (5-9 klasy)* [Educational program in foreign languages for basic secondary school (years 5-9)]. Kyiv: Osvita.


Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.
Appendices
Appendix 1

Phase 1 interview questions

Policy maker

- Could you outline the current policies in teaching foreign languages in Ukrainian schools? (What is important? What are the goals and ways to achieve them?)
- How do recent changes in the sphere of education influence policy making?
- What is happening or would you like to see happening in schools to prepare graduates for life?
- If any changes need to occur, which changes (innovations) you think would be adequate/appropriate?

Teacher educators

- How does teaching foreign languages happen in Ukraine? (What is important? What are the main goals and ways to achieve them?)
- How is it reflected in teacher preparation?
- What is the role of the teacher/students/material at the lesson?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of the current situation in teaching foreign languages?
- If any changes need to occur, which changes (innovations) do you think would be adequate/appropriate?
- How do you see this happen?

Teachers

- How does teaching foreign languages happen in your practice? (What is important? What are the goals and ways to achieve them?)
- What is role of the teacher/students/material in the lesson?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of the current situation in teaching foreign languages in Ukraine?
- If any changes need to occur, which changes (innovations) do you think would be adequate/appropriate?
- How do you see this happen?
## Appendix 2

#### Examples of translation of the chosen quotes into English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Policies**
Введення граматичних структур слід починати з показу форми, значення й вживання граматичної структури. 
Тренування бажано проводити спочатку усно в тренувальних вправах, що включають відтворення готового зразка, підстановку у ньому нових елементів, трансформацію і репродукцію. |
| Introduction of the [new] grammar structures should start with the presentation of the form, meaning and use of the grammar structure. Practice should be performed orally at first using drills and exercises that require repetition of the example, substitution of its elements, transformation and reproduction. (MOES, 2013a, p. 4). |
| Відомості, що стосуються: найтиповіших особливостей культури, звичаїв, традицій, свят, діячів літератури, мистецтва і науки, суспільно-політичних реалій та державної символіки, реалій побуту, культурних пам’яток, музеїв, театрів країни, мова якої вивчається. |
| Information regarding the most typical specificities of culture, customs, traditions, celebrations, famous people of literature, art and science, socio-political realities and state symbols, realities of the everyday routine, cultural memorials, museums, theatres of the country of the language. (MOES, 2011a, p. 5) |
| … єдності навчання і виховання на засадах гуманізму, демократії, громадянської свідомості, взаємоповаги між націями і народами… |
| … unity of academic and character education based on humanism, democracy, civic awareness, mutual respect between nations and peoples. (MOES, 2011b, p. 1) |
(Навчальний матеріал) повинен забезпечувати не лише оволодіння знаннями, навичками і вміннями з предмету, але й розвивати увагу, пам’ять, мислення учнів, формувати в них уміння робити висновки і узагальнення, розширювати світогляд, підвищувати культурний рівень, сприяти розвитку особистісних якостей, у тому числі доброзичливості, співпереживання, колективної взаємодопомоги тощо.

(In particular, these materials) have to not only ensure acquisition of knowledge and skills in the subject, but also develop students’ attention, memory, thinking, develop ability to make conclusions and generalisations, [they also] widen the worldview, upgrade the level of personal culture, foster development of personal qualities, including benevolence, empathy, collective mutual help, and others. (MOES, 2013a, p. 2)

### Teacher interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Вони скажуть: «А для чого нам писати, якщо не перевіряється?» Я оцінюю, я вимагаю з кожного роботу. Якщо сьогодні я не встигла, завтра я обов’язково напишу їм, що вправа така-то у мене не виконана… Тобто я щось там прогавила, вони: а оцінка?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Students] say: “Why would I write if it does not get checked?” So I give marks and I expect everyone to work. If I have no time today, I will do it tomorrow indicating which exercise they have not done… If I forget, they ask me: “What about the grade?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Я в 11 класе являюсь учителем зарубежной литературы, так у меня получается на уроках английского языка обсудить какую-то книгу, чьё-то произведение. Я знаю, что они знают, и помогаю это сказать на английском языке… Я их ободряю читать много на английском книг и периодики…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I teach world literature in year eleven, so during English lessons [with these students] I try to discuss a book or a novel. I am aware of what they might know, and help them say it in English… I also encourage [my students] to read English-language books and periodicals [where possible].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Головним на мою думку є те, щоб діти могли спілкуватися в іншомовній атмосфері, ті хто там подорожує наприклад діти могли не розгубитися, а вільно себе почувати і вести будь-яку розмову.

To my mind, the main idea is that children can speak in the foreign-language environment, and those who travel do not lose themselves, but feel confident to participate in any conversation.

На мою думку, є певна складність у використанні таких методик, оскільки діти в групах і вчитель не може контролювати кожну групу одночасно. Із шостим класом нещодавно ми працювали в групах, тільки ти відходиш – відразу українська мова, і кому та англійська потрібна. Тобто над ними тобто над ними треба стоять, і щоб вони українську на уроці забували.

I think there is a certain difficulty in the use of these methods as children are in groups and the teacher cannot control every group simultaneously. I worked with my year sixes in groups the other day, and once you move way they start speaking Ukrainian straight away and ‘who needs English?’ Therefore, you need to stay near and [make sure] they ‘forget’ Ukrainian during the lesson.
Appendix 3

Phase 2 focus-group interview questions

• What aspects of this approach would you incorporate into your practice? Why?
• What aspects of this approach could be challenging for your classroom? Why?
• Overall, would this approach be appropriate/beneficial for you and your students? Please explain.
Appendix 4

TBLT presentation outline

The following is a dot-point outline of the content and order of proceedings for the presentation to the participants in Phase 3 of this research study.

1. The researcher’s background.

2. Language teaching theory and empirical research

   - Behaviourist approaches
   - PPP (Present-Practice-Produce)

   “The underlying theory for a PPP approach has now been discredited. The belief that a precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatization (that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it is taught) no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology” (Skehan, 1996b, p. 18)

   “…learners did not acquire one item perfectly one at a time; they learned numerous items imperfectly, and often almost simultaneously. In addition, the learning was unstable. An item that appeared to have been acquired at one point in time seemed to have been ‘unlearned’ at a subsequent point in time” (Nunan, 2004, p. 11).

   - Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
     1) grammar-focused lesson with a bit of practice at the end;
     2) communication without any focus on form.
   - Conditions for language learning (based on Willis, 1996):
     Essential: exposure; use; motivation.
     Desirable: instruction.

3. What is a task

Willis (1996, p. 53) defines task as a “goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome. In other words, learners use whatever target
language resources they have in order to solve a problem, make a list, do a puzzle, play a game, or share and compare experiences.”

Is this a task: “Use the question form ‘Did you ever …’ to ask your partner about their childhood”? (Willis, 1998, p. 3).

4. **Task examples** (based on Duran & Ramaut, 2006; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Van Gorp & Bogaert, 2006)

- Information gap (spot the differences, make a picture)
- How dinosaurs disappeared from the earth?
- Writing letters containing a personal problem to a children’s magazine and giving advice.
- Carrying out scientific experiments and making hypothesis.
- Making a travel brochure.
- Things in the pockets: Students work in groups. Each group is given a “lost” coat or a bag with some things in pockets. Students discuss and make suggestions about who the owner might be (e.g., gender, profession, age, habits, etc.).
- A hole in your hand: Students follow instructions with the newspaper, holding it in a roll and looking through it at a certain angle, to achieve a visual illusion of having a hole in their hand.

5. **An example of the task cycle** (based on Willis, 1996, 2009)

Pre-task – Task phase (task, planning, report) – Language focus


- Teacher roles: selector and sequencer of tasks, preparing learners for tasks (topic introduction, clarifying task instructions, helping students learn or recall useful words and phrases to facilitate task accomplishment, providing
partial demonstration of task procedures), consciousness raising (Focus on Form – attention-focusing pre-task activities, text exploration, guided exposure to parallel tasks, use of highlighted material).

- Learner roles: group participant, monitor, risk-taker and innovator.

7. How task is different

- “An important conceptual basis for task-based language teaching is experiential learning. This approach takes the learner’s immediate personal experience as the point of departure for the learning experience. Intellectual growth occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks. The active involvement of the learner is therefore central to the approach … ‘learning by doing’. In this, it contrasts with a ‘transmission’ approach to education in which the learner acquires knowledge passively from the teacher” (Nunan, 2004, p. 12)

- Car metaphor (This metaphor provides an analogy between language learning and learning to become a car mechanic. It illustrates the difference between the synthetic approach to teaching where students learn about separate language items – which is compared to giving a trainee mechanic different parts of the car without ever seeing or using a car – and the analytic approach where students are given the whole language to experiment with - such as having the same trainee drive a car and then learn about its different components once understanding how it works.)

8. Modes of work with tasks (from Wright, 1987, p. 58)

- Individual
- Pair work
- Small group work
- Types of whole class work (Students, teacher-students, student-students)
9. **Pedagogical principles and practices facilitated by TBLT**  
(from Nunan, 2004, p. 1)

- A needs-based approach to content selection.
- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom.

10. **Synthetic vs analytic syllabuses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthetic</th>
<th>Analytic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the subject matter is broken down and sequenced from easy to difficult,</td>
<td>holistic “chunks” of language;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each item is introduced to the learner in a serial fashion</td>
<td>learners analyse them, break them down into parts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a new item is not supposed to be introduced until the current item had been thoroughly mastered</td>
<td>E.g., task-based syllabuses. (Nunan, 2004, p. 11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Conclusion**

- Holistic vs discrete learning
- Teacher-centred vs learner-driven education
- Communication-based vs form-focused instruction  
  (Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009, pp. 2-3)
12. Video examples

1) Students: ESL learners in England, primary school year one
   Mode: Pair work
   Task: A Maths task. Students work with the picture grid that all students in
   the class prepared illustrating the birds they had observed during the week.
   These are A3 sheets with children names, the day of the week when they saw
   a bird, and drawings of birds and places where they were spotted. The
   students need to cooperate in order to put this information into the matrix for
   the class to use. First, the students interact in order to fill in the matrix, then
   ask each other questions about the information on the matrix (note: in the
   process, one of the students who is less proficient in English learns a new
   sentence structure from his peer), and finally, write down statements for other
   students in their class to verify.

2) Students: EFL learners in Spain, upper primary school
   Mode: Pair work
   Task: An information gap task. One student has the layout of the kitchen and
   of the backyard, and the objects to arrange into these settings. The other
   student has two complete pictures and needs to explain to his peer where the
   objects should go. The students work with a dividing screen.

3) Students: ESL learners in Australia, primary school
   Mode: Pair work
   Task: An information gap task. One student receives a picture from the
   teacher and has to give directions so that another student can draw the same
   one. The student who has to draw the picture asks questions for clarification
   if needed. The students work with a dividing screen and have a ruler to
   measure sizes.
Appendix 5

Phase 3 case study interview questions

- Let’s speak about your teaching journey. Why did you decide to become a teacher/ to teach languages?
- What have been the biggest changes in your understanding and practice of FLT?
- What you consider to be the major influences on your teaching?
- What are your favorite teaching/learning activities that you often use in your lessons? Why?
- Let’s talk about your school and your students. How would you describe them?
Appendix 6

Participant Information Form and Consent Form samples

Re: Task-based language teaching in post-Soviet school classrooms:
Investigation of policies, practices and teacher perceptions

Dear Teacher,

I am a Doctoral student conducting fieldwork here in Ukraine. I am looking at education, specifically teaching foreign languages in public schools in post-Soviet countries. The study aims to investigate current policies, practices, teacher perceptions and appropriateness of educational innovations, such as task-based language teaching.

The current phase of the study comprises interviews with foreign language teachers, lesson observations, and lesson plan analysis. I trust you will allow me to be a non-participant observer at one of your lessons and take pictures of the classroom without people in it, and agree to participate in an interview and provide written samples of the lesson plans you use with your students.

Participation is completely voluntary and you are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences. The research project holds no risk of harm to the participants and has been approved by the Curtin Human Research Ethics Committee. All information collected for this research project will be confidential.

18 The working title of the project.
and no individual/school will be identified. At a later date the research findings may be published in a report that will be made available to your school.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me so that we can discuss your concerns. You can also contact my supervisor at phone +61 9266 2169 or email: rhonda.oliver@curtin.edu.au. If you have any concerns or complaints and wish to speak to an independent person, please contact the Research Ethics Officer, phone 9266 2784, email hrec@curtin.edu.au, postal address: Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845. If you are in agreement with this, could you please sign and return the following consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Tetiana Bogachenko

School of Education
Faculty of Humanities
Curtin University (Bentley Campus)
Kent Street
Bentley WA 6102
Phone: [researcher’s local phone number]
Email: tetiana.bogachenko@postgrad.curtin.edu.au
Consent Form

I have read the information in the accompanying letter about the research project *Task-based language teaching in post-Soviet school classrooms: Investigation of policies, practices and teacher perceptions*. I understand the aims and procedures described within the letter and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I am willing to become involved in the research under consideration, realising that I may withdraw my participation at any time without prejudice.

I understand that I will participate in an interview and provide written samples of lesson plans. I agree that the researcher will attend one of my lessons as a non-participant observer and take pictures of the classroom with no people in it.

I understand that neither students nor I may directly benefit from the research. However, I am aware that it may inform future approaches to improving the educational outcomes for students and ways of educational innovation.

I agree that the research data gathered in this study may be published provided the school, the teachers and the students are not identifiable, and I will be provided with the copy of the findings from this research upon its completion.

Name: __________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________ Date: __________________________

319
Appendix 7

Stuffed toys as a visual aid in the primary school classroom
Appendix 8

Handwriting samples

Sample 1. Handwriting books for primary school students
Sample 2. Handwriting in secondary school

I want
1. steady
2. beat
3. pump
4. breathe
5. oxygen
6. heart

Thursday, the 5th of November
Class work Review

1. coach
2. trophy
3. My brother is going to give me his old bike.
4. I might go swimming tomorrow. I have not decided yet.
5. Mum has to go to the supermarket
6. Do you have to do lots of homework last night?

2. the left side
3. things things of b
4. 1, 2, a

column - column
archaeologist -
station - station
steps - course
blue - blue
pot - potato
jewellery - jewellery
coring - potato
Appendix 9

A photo of the classroom with student-produced posters on the wall
Appendix 10

Project work submissions

Are you from 12 to 18 years and eager to have the best summer ever?

Then welcome to our Adventure Teen, Camp!

Being situated in the lush, soft jungles and not far from one of the hottest beaches of Australia it gives you a variety of opportunities for active rest.

You are welcome to visit us any time in December this year. The duration of visit is ten days.

Duration which you can sunbathe, swim, take photos with kangaroos and kiwis, dance and communicate with your new friends. Daredevils can also try themselves in climbing mountains, surfing or hang-gliding as well as taking a course in our survival camp. If you are lucky you can also participate in whale migration watching which is an exciting and fantastic experience.

If you have a desire to get fresh and unforgettable experiences have a lot of fun and to give a little adrenalin to your everyday routine, this place is for you.
Munich is the capital and largest city of the German State of Bavaria, on the banks of River Isar north of the Bavarian Alps. Munich is the third largest city in Germany, after Berlin and Hamburg, with a population of around 1.5 million. The Munich Metropolitan Region is home to 8.8 million people.

The city is an eclectic mix of historic buildings and modern architecture, Munich having reconstructed the ruins of these historic buildings that had been destroyed in World War II while creating new landmarks of architecture. A survey, conducted by the Society’s Center for the National Geographic Travel, chose over 100 historic places around the world.

Munich International Airport is used by around 34 million passengers a year. The Munich tramway is the oldest existing public transportation system in the city, which has been in operation since 1876.

You must visit Munich, because there is many interesting places. And a lot things to see.

— Welcome! —
This is Lina Kostyuk. She is from Ukraine. She is Ukrainian. Lina is a Ukrainian poet and writer.

This is Andrij Shevchenko. He is from Ukraine. He is Ukrainian. Andrij is a retired footballer who played for Dnipro Kyiv, Milan, Celtic, as well as the Ukrainian national team as a striker.

This is Angela Merkel. She is from Germany. She is German politician. She is the first woman to hold either office. Merkel was born in Hamburg, West Germany.
Appendix 11

A sample of the activity card

Make up a story using the following words:

bargain, cash, fitting room, get a refund, look for, try on, too small, shop assistant, customer, pay by credit card, out of stock, match, fit, discount.
Appendix 12

Headlines for the news reports prepared by students

1. NASA started selecting astronauts for mission to Mars
2. World News Update. What you need to know
3. THE FIRST CRASH OF B-2
4. The world is on fire
5. chornobyl Nuclear Accident
6. The World Wildlife Fund has warned that climate change is threatening the snow leopard
7. The Star Wars: The Force Awakens
8. Volcanic eruption in Japan
9. Interesting facts about towers-twins