

EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR WRITING SKILL

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Abstract

This study exploring students' experiences with task-based language teaching (TBLT) in a senior high school located in Karawang. Employing a qualitative case study design, data collection involved classroom observations during two meeting in TBLT activities and subsequent interviews with nine students. The analysis revealed a positive impact of TBLT on student experience. Students reported increased knowledge with English language use, leading to gains in vocabulary, language fluency, and writing skills. Furthermore, the study identified how TBLT made learning more active, with students participating more, working together, and figuring things out for themselves. However, challenges related to limited vocabulary knowledge and grammar difficulties were also identified. This research contributes to the field by offering insights into student perspectives on TBLT for writing skill and its influence on the overall learning process. The findings hold potential to inform educators, students, and schools on effective implementation strategies to enhance the learning experience.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching; Students' Experience; Learning Process

INTRODUCTION

Developing strong writing skills is crucial for academic and personal success, but many students find it challenging. Writing has an important role in our daily life, some people use writing for communication to others because people can interact with other people not only use spoken language but also use written language (Pratiwi et al., 2015). This difficulty is particularly evident for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Indonesia, as highlighted by Inayanti & Halimi (2019). Their research emphasizes the importance of effective writing strategies for language acquisition. However, Sundari et al. (2018) point out that writing can be a frustrating and challenging skill for EFL learners. Naudhani & Naudhani (2017) address this concern by suggesting teachers actively support students in producing quality writing.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerges as a promising approach. TBLT is a language learning methodology that prioritizes communication and real-world application through engaging tasks. Unlike traditional other methods, Task-Based Language Teaching, or TBLT, structures learning around a three-stage cycle. First comes the pre-task phase, which prepares students for the main event. Here, the teacher introduces the task and activates relevant knowledge and skills. This might involve brainstorming ideas, reviewing vocabulary, or getting clear instructions. The heart of TBLT is the task cycle itself. During this stage, students take center stage, completing the assigned task. This could be anything from role-playing a scenario to writing a report or even creating a presentation. Finally, the post-task phase allows students to reflect on their learning journey. They might share their work with classmates, discuss any challenges they faced, or analyze their progress in using the target language. These stages create a natural learning environment where students actively use language to complete meaningful tasks, mirroring real-world situations and promoting communication (Nunan, 1989).

This study delves into the experiences of EFL learners (English as a Foreign Language) as they engage with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT prioritizes communication and practical application through engaging tasks. These tasks can range from simulations like roleplaying interviews to creative projects like writing a travel brochure. By completing these tasks, students actively use the language in a meaningful context, but the focus here is on understanding how they perceive and experience this approach to learning. The research question driving this study is: **What are students' experiences in using TBLT for writing skills?**

Studies have consistently shown the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in promoting language acquisition. Research by Joy (2020) suggests that students find TBLT a comfortable and engaging environment for developing writing skills, while Kaharuddin et al. (2022) demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing descriptive writing specifically. Their study, employing both quantitative writing tests and qualitative data like questionnaires and interviews, provided robust evidence for TBLT's benefits. Furthermore, Milarisa's (2019) research found positive student responses and increased interest in using TBLT for writing instruction, highlighting its potential to motivate learners.

While existing research establishes the potential of TBLT, a gap exists in our understanding of how students experience TBLT and how those experiences translate into writing development. Previous studies, as described above, have used various methods like descriptive, explanatory-sequential, experimental, and mixed-methods approaches. This current research addresses this gap by employing a case study method. This method allows us to delve into the student experience within a specific TBLT classroom setting, providing valuable insights into the impact of TBLT on EFL writing skills.

METHOD

This qualitative study adopted a multiple case study design to investigate students' experiences using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for writing development. The research took place at a senior high school in Karawang, Indonesia. Data collection involved two methods. First, researchers observed a class using TBLT (class 11.2), focusing on teacher instruction, student activities, and classroom dynamics. This open observation documented all relevant events. Second, nine students were purposefully selected (three from each English proficiency level) to participate in individual, semi-structured interviews. The interview guide, informed by Dewey and Suci (2022), explored student experiences with TBLT for writing. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. To analyze the data, a thematic analysis approach (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) was used. Transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes across participants while acknowledging individual variations in their experiences. This helped the study understand both what students generally experienced and how those experiences differed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study was carried out at one of senior high school in Karawang. This study also involved 9 students and semi-structured interviews were employed to delve into students' experience in task-based language teaching for writing skill.

A. Students' Perceived Advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

This study investigated students' experience in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through interviews with nine students who had recently completed a TBLT activities. The

analysis revealed three main themes related to students' statements: deeper understanding of writing skills; enhanced vocabulary knowledge; developing English usage habits

1. Deeper Understanding of writing skills

Students consistently reported feeling that their grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure skills improved. This suggests that TBLT moves away from simply memorizing rules and instead creates a more meaningful learning experience. By using engaging tasks that involve real-world situations, TBLT encourages students to learn these rules by using them in practice. This approach is more effective than simply doing grammar drills. Students are not just memorizing the rules; they are also understanding why the rules are important. This helps them use the language more effectively in their writing.

S1: *“By studying grammar and vocabulary, we can better understand the structure of the English language.”*

S2: *“The benefits of studying grammar and vocabulary include becoming more understanding of the English language and improving your ability to write and speak it.”*

S4: *“Practice English writing skills”*

From the 3 students' answers above, they feel that the use of TBLT increases their understanding of basic English. Grammar, vocabulary, and structure are also important aspects in English that are used to convey an idea that we have. These positive perceptions highlight the potential of TBLT as a valuable method for improving writing skills in the classroom. The focus on using the language in practical ways within engaging tasks seems to be successful with students. Students develop a stronger understanding of fundamental skills, but also feel more confident and fluent in using the language. Ultimately, TBLT's emphasis on real-world application helps students become more skilled and creative writers, able to express themselves clearly and effectively.

2. Expand vocabulary knowledge

Building a strong vocabulary is a cornerstone of effective communication. Just like building blocks, a wide range of words allows learners to construct clear and nuanced sentences that accurately convey their thoughts and ideas. However, traditional methods of vocabulary learning, often relying on rote memorization of lists, can be ineffective and lead to rapid forgetting. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a refreshing alternative by integrating vocabulary acquisition into engaging tasks that are relevant to the learners' interests and learning goals. By encountering new words and expressions within the context of a meaningful activity, students begin to develop a deeper understanding of how these words function and how to use them effectively in their writing and speaking.

S5: *“Learning more vocabulary in English will help me expand your knowledge.”*

S9: *“By practicing English, I can enrich my vocabulary and speak more fluently.”*

In addition to strengthening grammar and sentence structures, students also appreciated TBLT's role in expanding their vocabulary. Unlike memorizing lists of words, TBLT activities

use engaging tasks to introduce new vocabulary in a natural way. Students learn new words and expressions by encountering them within the context of a task, like following a recipe or writing instructions. This makes vocabulary learning more meaningful and memorable. For example, one student mentioned learning “a lot of new vocabulary” during a lesson on procedure writing (S5). Another student highlighted how TBLT helps them “use more vocabulary” (S9). By using new words in TBLT tasks, students become more familiar with them and comfortable using them in their writing and speaking.

3. Develop English usage habits

The ability to communicate effectively in English unlocks a world of opportunities. However, building fluency can feel like a significant hurdle. This exploration delves into the concept of habit formation as a key strategy for language acquisition.

S3: *“Using TBLT can help me improve our understanding of English vocabulary. By encountering vocabulary in context, I become more familiar with its usage in everyday situations.”*

S6: *“The benefit of using full English sentences might be that they're easier to understand for someone already familiar with the language. This allows for quicker comprehension.”*

Through the statements of the students above, 2 students felt that the habituation of using English in the TBLT method helped them to better understand English discussions. Although they feel a bit difficult at first, if they are used to it, they will more quickly understand the sentences spoken by others and what they want to say.

B. Challenges Students Face in task-based language teaching

From data analysis, researcher revealed 3 main themes including: limited vocabulary knowledge; difficulty with established English usage habits; challenge with sentence grammar.

1. Limited vocabulary knowledge

In interviews conducted by researchers, researchers found that many students lack knowledge in vocabulary. This can be seen in the bold sentences of the statements of some students as follows:

S1: *“Sometimes teachers use vocabulary that students may not understand.”*

S2: *“The difficulty lies in reading comprehension, because English vocabulary often has a different order of letters compared to Indonesian”*

S7: *“The challenge is that some words have slightly different spellings even though they refer to the same concept.”*

S8: *“Some vocabulary can be quite difficult to learn”*

S9: *“My limited vocabulary makes me stutter.”*

Judging from the interview results, 5 out of 9 students have a lack of knowledge in their vocabulary. In addition to mastering 4 basic skills in English, vocabulary knowledge is also

important to learn. Because, without sufficient vocabulary, ideas cannot be conveyed properly. The more vocabulary we know, the greater our ability to understand what we hear, read, or write.

2. Difficulties in applying established English usage habits

Beyond vocabulary and grammar, students also struggled to adapt their native language habits to the nuances of everyday English. This can be seen in several student statements below:

- S3: *“It can be challenging at first. I wasn't used to using full English sentences before.”*
- S4: *“English can be difficult when I'm not used to it. Every aspect of English learning feels challenging then.”*
- S6: *“I find it takes me longer to understand because I'm still adjusting to using full English.”*

According to 3 students out of 9 students interviewed, 3 students felt they were less accustomed to the use of English. In fact, the use of target language on a daily basis can train all skills in English. For example, if they apply English practice every direct English lesson, they can gain new knowledge about how to ask permission to go to the toilet, how to ask the right sentences, and so on.

3. Challenge with sentence structure

Learning grammar also makes it easier for our interlocutors to understand what we are saying, making us better communicators. Unfortunately, there is one student who have difficulty with grammatical which can be seen from the statement below:

- S5: *“The difficulty lies in constructing English sentences.”*

From the sentence above, it can be seen that one of the students interviewed had difficulty in phrasing. This is due to a lack of practice in the correct use of grammar. Without a strong foundation in grammatical structures, students might struggle to express themselves accurately, even if they possess a decent vocabulary.

C. Students motivation in task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Student motivation in learning is an important aspect to note. If the student does not have motivation, he will also not have the spirit of learning in himself. According to a statement from the interview results of class XI.2 students, some students explained the learning motivation they felt when using the TBLT method in class.

- S1: *“Yes, constructing English sentences can be challenging, but it definitely helps upgrade my skills.”*
- S4: *“Yes, because the more I practice English, the more I learn”*
- S5: *“Yes, because it makes it easier for us to practice every day.”*

As can be seen from the results of the interview above, some students feel more motivated to use TBLT in their English learning. They also stated why their reasons were motivated such

as honing their skills, making it easier to learn by practicing the target language daily, making them more participatory and more.

Discussion

This research investigates student experiences using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to develop writing skills. Interviews with students revealed three key themes: perceived advantages of TBLT, student challenges encountered, and factors influencing student motivation.

The first theme highlights the numerous benefits students associate with TBLT. Interestingly, their experiences mirror existing research on TBLT's positive impact on core English language skills. Students themselves reported improvements in grammar, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure. These findings align with observations by Rubaiat (2018) and Kafipour et al. (2018) who documented similar advantages for secondary and intermediate EFL learners, respectively. Their studies investigating TBLT's effects on writing skills found that students engaged in TBLT activities demonstrated significant improvement in using grammatical structures correctly, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and constructing clear and well-organized sentences. This suggests that the inherent nature of TBLT encourages students to actively manipulate and use language in meaningful contexts, leading to a deeper understanding and improved control of core language skills.

The second key theme centers on TBLT's potential to expand vocabulary knowledge. This study's findings, exemplified by student S9's comment about learning more vocabulary during TBLT tasks, suggest that TBLT can be effective in this area. This aligns with the emphasis Milarisa (2019) placed on TBLT's role in vocabulary development. Her research observed increased writing achievement among university ESP students, which she linked to TBLT activities. While there might be some variations in the specific vocabulary learned by ESP students (who focus on English for specific purposes) compared to general EFL learners, both studies highlight TBLT's effectiveness in expanding vocabulary knowledge.

The current study's focus on TBLT in writing skills suggests that learners are exposed to vocabulary specific to written tasks and genres. This is because TBLT tasks often involve planning, discussing, and creating texts, which can introduce students to new vocabulary relevant to the writing context. Joy's (2020) research with upper-intermediate ESL learners in Canada aligns with this notion. Her study documented improvements in fluency and complexity, which can be indicators of a broader vocabulary repertoire. However, Joy's study likely involved a wider range of communicative contexts compared to this one focused on writing skills. Despite these differences, both studies suggest that TBLT's engaging activities promote vocabulary development by exposing learners to new words in a meaningful way, fostering a richer understanding of the language.

This study revealed that students (S3 and S6) attributed their improved comprehension and potentially increased fluency to the emphasis on using English in TBLT classes. This aligns with the concept of increased language acquisition through being surrounded by English, which was also observed in Fauzi's (2016) study. While both studies showed positive impacts on writing skills likely due to the increased exposure to English in TBLT classrooms, the current study delves deeper into the concept of fostering English usage habits. Students' comments suggest that TBLT's focus on using English goes beyond just writing, potentially benefiting overall language development and fluency, which aligns well with the broader communication goals of TBLT pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This study explored student experiences with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for writing skills. While students faced challenges like limited vocabulary and infrequent English use in their daily lives, the overall experience with TBLT was positive. One of the key advantages of TBLT was its ability to promote active participation throughout all stages of a task, from understanding instructions to collaborating on projects and analyzing their work. The “full English” rule in TBLT classrooms fostered discussions and teamwork during tasks like creating procedural texts. Additionally, TBLT tasks likely exposed students to new vocabulary relevant to the writing topic, potentially expanding their knowledge base. The collaborative nature of these tasks further enhanced learning through discussions and peer feedback, which may have contributed to improved writing skills. The emphasis on using English in TBLT likely motivated students to persevere through the challenges and continue learning. This suggests that TBLT can not only develop writing skills but also foster a growth mindset and a willingness to learn from mistakes.

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