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Trinh Quoc Lap 
Can Tho University, Viet Nam

Tran Minh Bao Ngoc 
Tien Giang Department of Education and Training, Viet Nam

Le Cong Tuan 
Can Tho University, Viet Nam

Pham Ngoc Tuong Vy 
Can Tho University, Viet Nam

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Trinh Quoc Lap, Tran Minh Bao Ngoc, Le Cong Tuan, Pham Ngoc Tuong Vy

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Abstract

The adoption of task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained prominence recently, especially in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing to teenagers. While much research centered on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and implementation, learners' voices seem unheard in the literature. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate teenagers' experiences with TBLT in their English language acquisition journey, specifically focusing on their perceived advantages and challenges on this approach. Through qualitative interviews with a select group of six teenagers, this study explored their perceptions, feelings, and challenges faced during TBLT sessions. Participant responses were analyzed thematically and informed by constructivism, sociocultural theory, self-determination theory, and flow theory theoretical frameworks. The results revealed several advantages of TBLT, including an enhancement in writing affection, the appropriateness of the teaching method, and the enrichment in writing outcomes in terms of vocabulary, content, organization, and grammar. However, challenges were also identified, including the unfamiliarity with the TBLT lesson process, content knowledge deficiencies, vocabulary constraints, mother tongue interferences, and time restrictions. These findings were discussed in light of the theoretical underpinnings, offering a deeper understanding of the learner experience.

Introduction

In second language acquisition, pedagogical approaches have consistently evolved to respond to academic research findings and learners' practical needs. One such approach that has gained substantial attention in recent decades is task-based language teaching (TBLT). Grounded in the belief that language is best acquired through authentic tasks, TBLT shifts the focus from traditional forms of language instruction towards communicative activities where the primary focus is on meaning exchange rather than form (Ahmadian, 2016). This approach underscores the importance of engaging students in practical, meaningful tasks that mirror real-life situations. While the advantages and disadvantages of TBLT have been explored in various settings with different learners (Bao & Du, 2015; Subekti, 2020), a relatively sparse body of research specifically focuses on its application in English writing classes for teenagers.

Given that teenagers have distinct cognitive, social, and emotional needs (Ellis et al., 2020), understanding their perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of TBLT in enhancing their writing skills is vital. This insight can aid teachers in customizing task-based writing lessons more adeptly for this age group, ensuring the best language learning results. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap by exploring teenagers' reflections regarding the advantages and disadvantages of TBLT in learning English writing. By delving into these learners' firsthand experiences and insights, this study is expected to shed light on how TBLT resonates with them, what they find beneficial, and their challenges. This understanding can potentially inform teachers, curriculum designers, and policy-makers in making informed decisions about language instruction for teenagers.

Literature Review

Foundations of TBLT

TBLT emerged as a reaction against traditional grammar-focused methods, emphasizing communicative competence and real-life context (Nunan, 2004). Nunan (2006) introduced the TBLT method, describing a task as an activity in the classroom that requires students to understand, work with, generate, or engage in the target language, primarily concentrating on its meaning instead of its structure. Several studies have lauded the benefits of TBLT. Córdoba Zúñiga (2016) contended that TBLT offers authentic, meaningful, and contextualized language exposure, creating a more natural learning environment. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that TBLT enhances learners' motivation due to its interactive and practical nature (Chua & Lin, 2020; Tavakoli et al., 2019). By engaging learners in meaningful communication, TBLT fosters not only linguistic skills but also problem-solving abilities and collaboration (Willis & Willis, 2007). A study by Lu, Ma and Li (2024) indicated that TBLT, especially when being localized, encourages fluency and complexity in learner outputs, aligning with the argument that tasks mimic real-life language use. Tabari an Hui (2024) extended this view, arguing that task complexity in TBLT can be manipulated to promote linguistic development by pushing learners beyond their comfort zones while still maintaining comprehensibility. Rubab and Ahmed (2025) recently highlighted that TBLT supports the balance between fluency, accuracy, and complexity, enabling learners to develop communicative competence more holistically than traditional methods. Despite its recognized benefits, TBLT is not without its challenges.

Previous studies (e.g. Sample & Michel, 2014; Khatib & Farahanynia, 2020) have discussed how there might be a trade-off between accuracy, fluency, and complexity in learner outputs when using tasks. Some teachers have found it challenging to design tasks that cater to all proficiency levels within a diverse class (Long, 2014). Additionally, there are concerns about assessment within a TBLT framework, especially in striking a balance between form and meaning (Butler, 2011; Ellis, 2017). From an instructional perspective, EFL teachers find it challenging to design tasks that cater to all proficiency levels within a diverse class (Jing, Mohamad, & Zahidi, 2024). The demand for extensive preparation, adaptability, and scaffolding places additional strain on educators when implementing tasks in classrooms (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Poyonova, Abdishukurova, & Shomurodova, 2025). There are also concerns about assessment within a TBLT framework, especially in striking a balance between form and meaning as TBLT assessment requires alternative approaches, which may not align well with standardized testing methods prevalent in many educational contexts (Trinh et al., 2025).

TBLT in Teenagers' Context

Most research on TBLT has primarily focused on adult learners. However, there is growing interest in its application among teenagers. Teenagers, typically those between the ages of 5 and 12, have cognitive, emotional, and social needs distinct from their older counterparts (Wolf & Butler, 2017). Lindstromberg (2004) pointed out that teenagers tend to be more curious and willing to experiment with the language, making them well-suited for TBLT. However, they also require engaging, relevant, and age-appropriate tasks to maintain their interest (Cameron, 2001). While numerous studies evaluate TBLT's effectiveness in linguistic outcomes, there is a conspicuous gap in the literature concerning teenagers' perceptions of this approach. A few notable exceptions exist: a study by Myles and Mitchell (2004) explored children's perceptions of task-based activities and found a positive correlation between task engagement and perceived learning. Considering teenagers' distinct characteristics and needs and the apparent scarcity of research that explicitly addresses their perceptions (Watt et al., 2004), this study seeks to contribute to understanding how this demographic perceives the advantages and disadvantages of the TBLT approach. Recognizing their reflective responses towards a new approach can offer invaluable insights into pedagogical adjustments required to maximize the benefits of TBLT for this age group. Thus, the current study was guided by the primary research question:

What are teenagers' reflected benefits and challenges of TBLT in their English writing learning process?

Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical frameworks underpinned this study. Rooted in the works of Vygotsky and Cole (1978), constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed, rather than absorbed, through learners' active engagement with their environment. This aligns with TBLT's emphasis on active, meaningful engagement in tasks. Exploring teenagers' perceptions through a constructivist lens allowed the researchers to understand how they constructed meaning and knowledge through task-based activities. Secondly, emphasizing the social and cultural context, sociocultural theory posits that learning is deeply influenced by social interactions and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 2019). By situating teenagers' perceptions within their sociocultural contexts, this study acknowledged the influence of classroom dynamics, peer interactions, and cultural backgrounds in shaping their views on TBLT. Moreover, the Self Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan and Deci (2022) also informed this study. SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation in learners. In the context of TBLT, understanding teenagers' perceptions through the lens of SDT can shed light on how task-based activities may foster or hinder their intrinsic motivation in English writing. Particularly, it allows the researchers to examine whether TBLT supports or undermines the three psychological needs stipulated in SDT and how these impact teenagers' engagement and motivation.

Flow Theory, proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (2014), was also incorporated into the study's framework. Flow is described as a state in which individuals are fully immersed in an activity with a balance between the challenges of the task and their skills, leading to optimal experience and heightened focus. Exploring teenagers' perceptions in light of the Flow Theory provides insight into moments where they might experience such immersion during TBLT and whether such moments contribute to more effective and enjoyable writing experiences. This can further

illuminate if and how TBLT activities are designed to allow learners to achieve a state of flow, optimizing their learning outcomes and enjoyment in the English writing process.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

This study utilized a qualitative approach, aiming to delve into teenagers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of TBLT in their English writing journey. Qualitative research emphasizes individuals' personal experiences, offering in-depth, nuanced insights that are often beyond the reach of quantitative methods in understanding writing processes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This study drew on six teenagers (three males and three females). They were all twelve years old, with an English learning experience of three to five years. Their English proficiency was estimated to be equivalent to high-A2 of the CEFR. The teenage participants were randomly chosen from two intact grade 6 classes in a secondary school in one of the Mekong Delta districts. These six participants represented a larger population of 80 sixth-graders in that school. For confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to these teenagers. Their brief demographics are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Description of Participants

Participant	Gender	Years of Learning English
Participant A	Male	5 years
Participant B	Male	3 years
Participant C	Female	5 years
Participant D	Female	5 years
Participant E	Male	5 years
Participant F	Female	4 years

Materials and Instruments for Data Collection

The TBLT writing lessons were taught for eight weeks. The material for the lessons was adapted from the writing sections of units 8-12 in the textbook *Global Success*, which is compulsorily used for teaching Vietnamese grade 6 classes. One of the authors was in charge of delivering these lessons. The other authors discussed and modified the lesson plans before applying them to ensure they were appropriate and compliant with TBLT principles. The primary method chosen for this study's data collection was semi-structured interviews. This approach was selected considering the subjective and nuanced nature of the study's primary research question. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, enabling participants to articulate their perspectives openly while ensuring that the key research areas are sufficiently addressed.

Before the primary data collection commenced, pilot interviews were conducted with two students not involved in the main study. The purpose of these pilots was twofold: to evaluate the effectiveness and clarity of the interview questions and to estimate the average duration of each interview session. Feedback from these pilot participants proved invaluable. They pointed out certain ambiguities in the questions and even suggested areas

that might offer more profound insights.

After the pilot interviews, necessary revisions were made to the interview questions. Some questions were rephrased for clarity, while others were added, which opened avenues to more nuanced insights. To make the interview process more efficient, redundant or overlapping questions were removed. A few of the revised sample questions included:

- How does TBLT resonate with you compared to other methods you have been exposed to when learning English writing?
- Can you recount a particular task you found memorable and explain why it stood out?
- Were there tasks you found less engaging or overly challenging? Can you explain why?
- How does completing a language task generally make you feel?

Ethical considerations were at the forefront of the research process. All participants and their guardians provided informed consent before the interviews. They were assured of complete anonymity, with pseudonyms replacing real names in all research documents. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to opt out of the study at any stage. Complete transparency was maintained about the study's objectives and the data's intended use. Regarding logistics, each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, providing participants ample time to share their experiences without feeling pressed for time. The interviews were organized in a tranquil room within the school premises after regular school hours, ensuring a familiar and comfortable setting for the participants. Given that the participants' native language is Vietnamese, all interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure comfort and to glean accurate, unfiltered responses. These responses were subsequently translated into English by a proficient bilingual translator for analysis. Finally, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent to address data storage and retrieval. These recordings were transcribed verbatim and stored securely in a password-protected digital format. Physical copies of consent forms and other pertinent documents were safeguarded in a locked cabinet to uphold data privacy and security.

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase was approached meticulously, aiming to extract comprehensive insights from the rich qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis approach was adopted because the study focused on understanding perceptions and subjective experiences. This methodology is particularly suited to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun et al., 2023). To begin with, each interview transcript was read multiple times by the researchers to gain a deep familiarity with the content. This initial immersion was pivotal in allowing the research team to understand the overarching narratives and individual nuances in participants' responses. Each transcript was then annotated with initial codes, highlighting key points, recurring sentiments, and unique perspectives. The research team collated codes into potential themes following this initial coding phase. This involved clustering related codes, considering how they formed a coherent pattern. This phase was iterative, with themes being reviewed, refined, and, where necessary, split or merged to reflect the underlying data more accurately.

After defining the themes, the research team revisited the original transcripts to validate them. This ensured that the themes genuinely represented the participants' views and experiences. Each theme was then analyzed in-depth, allowing for the extraction of prevalent trends and individual variances within the dataset. Given that the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and later translated into English, it was essential to ensure that cultural and linguistic nuances were retained during the analysis. To this end, a bilingual team member was actively involved in the thematic analysis process, ensuring that participants' responses' integrity was preserved and contextual interpretations were accurate. Visual aids, like mind maps and flowcharts, were employed during the analysis process to represent relationships between themes, offering the research team a clearer understanding of the emerged patterns. In the final stage of the analysis, findings were related back to the existing literature, allowing for a comparative understanding and placing the current study's findings within the broader academic discourse. This also highlighted areas where the study's findings supported, expanded upon, or diverged from previously established knowledge.

Results and Discussion

Benefits of TBLT

Enhancing Interest and "Love" for Writing

Informed by the constructivist framework, which postulates that learning is a continuous process of constructing new knowledge based on prior knowledge, the findings demonstrate that TBLT has significantly benefited teenagers in their English language acquisition journey. A prominent benefit echoed by the participants is enhancing their interest in learning writing. Participant A stated, "It gives us many interesting lessons," with Participant B further iterating, "I feel very happy. I feel that it is interesting." These sentiments resonate with the notion of constructivism, where the interactive and dynamic nature of TBLT tasks ignites learners' intrinsic motivation, subsequently making the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful.

From the perspective of the SDT, the findings suggest that TBLT addresses the core psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby bolstering intrinsic motivation. When Participant A mentions "interesting lessons," it can be inferred that the tasks align with their interests, thus fulfilling their need for autonomy – the desire to control one's actions and the freedom to pursue personal interests. Furthermore, Participant B's expressions of happiness and interest suggest a feeling of competence, meaning teenagers feel equipped and confident to face the challenges presented by the tasks. In turn, this feeling of competence can boost their intrinsic motivation to learn and engage with writing, reinforcing the SDT's claim that when learners feel competent, their intrinsic motivation is heightened. Flow Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the state of complete immersion and concentration, where challenges align perfectly with one's skills. Participant B's sentiment, "I feel very happy. I feel that it is interesting," might indicate experiencing "flow" during the TBLT activities. In this context, the word "interesting" can be understood as tasks that are neither too challenging nor too easy, striking a balance that makes learners lose track of time and become deeply engrossed. Such tasks are likely to make learners achieve a state of flow, optimizing their learning outcomes and enjoyment of the English writing process.

Facilitating Comprehension and Writing Confidence

Another benefit derived from the data is the effectiveness of TBLT in teaching writing. Participants highlighted the nature of the tasks and how they facilitated easier comprehension. Participant E's remark captures this, "I feel very good because this method is very easy to understand," and supplemented by another comment, "The approach made things simpler and less daunting" (Participant D). As sociocultural theory suggests, social interactions and cultural contexts are pivotal in cognitive development. In line with this, several participants recognized the potential of TBLT in increasing real-life communication opportunities. Participant C mentioned, "It helps me communicate with native speakers, write English paragraphs, email. Communicate in English through texting and writing letters," with Participant F concurring, "The method bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication". Drawing from the SDT, the remarks made by the participants about the effectiveness of TBLT in teaching writing may be viewed through the lens of competence. When Participant E says the method is "very easy to understand," it implies that the tasks are designed to bolster the learners' feelings of competence. This sense of capability and mastery over the writing tasks instills a higher intrinsic motivation, as learners are likelier to engage in such activities that they feel competent in. Similarly, the comment about the approach making things "simpler and less daunting" underscores that TBLT might effectively address the psychological need for competence, resulting in a more favorable learning outcome.

From Classroom Learning to Motivation for Real-World Communication

Flow Theory can also unpack these findings. When tasks are perceived as "easy to understand" or "simpler," it suggests they may strike the right balance between challenge and skill for the learners. Achieving this equilibrium is key to inducing a state of flow where learners are wholly engrossed in the task at hand. The feeling of tasks being "less daunting" may indicate that students are experiencing this state of optimal immersion, which amplifies the teaching method's effectiveness. Moving beyond the individual's intrinsic experience, sociocultural theory's emphasis on social interactions and cultural contexts comes to the forefront, along with the participants' views on real-life communication opportunities. The emphasis on communicating with "native speakers" and "real-world communication" suggests that TBLT does not operate in a vacuum. It is intrinsically tied to the sociocultural milieu in which it is practiced. This reinforces the SDT principle of relatedness, which posits that teenagers have an innate need to connect and interact with others. TBLT, as reflected by Participants C and F, seemingly fulfills this need by bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world, thereby enhancing both motivation and the practical utility of the learning experience.

Enrichment of Vocabulary, Content, Organization, and Grammar

Further benefits from the interviews underlined the enrichment of vocabulary, content, organization, and grammar. Participant A recognized this, stating, "I find it helps me learn different English words... it helps to increase my vocabulary." Participant D also affirmed the broadening of content, mentioning the resources provided, "I have more content and ideas to write... from sample essays and provided materials." These benefits can be interpreted within the lens of sociocultural theory, emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning

in TBLT, which facilitates mutual scaffolding among peers, leading to the co-construction of knowledge. From the vantage point of the SDT, the remarks about the enrichment of vocabulary, content, organization, and grammar can be seen through the need for competence. The act of mastering new vocabulary words, as Participant A mentioned, reinforces a sense of achievement and proficiency in the English language. Such positive feedback mechanisms can significantly boost a learner's intrinsic motivation. Participant D's acknowledgment of expanded content from resources echoes a sense of autonomy; they have access to diverse materials, enabling them to take charge of their learning journey, drawing from a wealth of resources. This heightened sense of autonomy and competence from mastering vocabulary and content further bolsters intrinsic motivation. From the perspective of Flow Theory, the structured enrichment process, which includes vocabulary expansion, organized content, and grammar, potentially creates an environment where challenges are met with adequate skills. The more equipped students feel the closer they get to that sweet spot of "flow," where the challenge perfectly aligns with their capabilities, leading to deep immersion and heightened learning.

Challenges of TBLT

Unfamiliarity with TBLT and Its Cognitive Demands

Rooted in the constructivist framework, the unfamiliarity with the TBLT lesson process was evident among participants who were accustomed to more traditional teaching methods. Participant A admitted, "I have difficulty understanding the purpose of the task," and Participant D added, "When I first encountered this method, I was a bit surprised because it was the first time I was exposed to this method. Because it is not like the way I learned before". From the perspective of the SDT, the unfamiliarity with the TBLT process can threaten the learners' sense of competence. If learners have been accustomed to traditional teaching methods where the learning trajectory is linear and structured, the shift to TBLT might be disorienting. As Participant A's comment suggests, not understanding the "purpose of the task" can lead to feelings of inadequacy or confusion, potentially undermining their intrinsic motivation. If learners do not feel competent in navigating the task, their motivation and engagement may wane. Moreover, the sudden shift from a familiar educational landscape to an unfamiliar one can also affect the psychological need for autonomy, highlighted in SDT.

Though TBLT is designed to give students more agency in their learning, an abrupt introduction without proper orientation can make learners feel lost, making the method counterproductive. Participant D's surprise upon encountering TBLT and the juxtaposition of it with their previous learning experiences underscores this very challenge. From the vantage of Flow Theory, a mismatch between the challenge posed by the TBLT method and the learner's current skill set can prevent the achievement of the flow state. For learners to experience flow, the balance between the difficulty of the task and their capabilities is crucial. Suppose TBLT presents challenges too far removed from their current skill set or previous learning experiences (as Participant D implied). In that case, learners might be overwhelmed or under-challenged, both deterrents to the flow state.

Content and Idea Generation Difficulties

Another challenge highlighted was the lack of content knowledge, as posited by Participant D, "Sometimes, I

cannot find ideas in the process of writing”. This sentiment was echoed by Participant F’s comment, “Often, I feel stuck, unable to marshal my thoughts effectively”. From the SDT viewpoint, the feelings of not being able to generate ideas or effectively marshal thoughts, as articulated by the participants, can be perceived as an infringement on the psychological need for competence. When learners continuously grapple with content generation, their sense of efficacy and mastery over the subject diminishes. Such experiences can lead to reduced intrinsic motivation, as learners might feel that they are not capable enough to handle the tasks. This is particularly pronounced when the teaching approach, in this case, TBLT, does not provide sufficient scaffolding or resources to bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and the task requirements. Flow Theory provides another layer to understanding this challenge. For learners to be in a flow state, the task’s demands should align closely with their skill set. The comments about feeling “stuck” or struggling to find “ideas” suggest that the challenges posed by TBLT may sometimes surpass their current capabilities. This imbalance between challenge and skill can prevent learners from entering the flow state, resulting in feelings of frustration, inadequacy, or stagnation. The sociocultural theory, emphasizing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), offers a solution-oriented perspective. If learners find it challenging to generate content or marshal their thoughts, the tasks might be outside their current ZPD. For optimal learning, tasks should be designed within the learner’s ZPD, ensuring they are neither easy (leading to boredom) nor difficult (leading to frustration). In the realm of TBLT, this underscores the importance of careful task design and adequate support, be it through peer collaboration, teacher intervention, or access to resources, ensuring learners remain within their ZPD.

Vocabulary Constraints and Reliance on The Mother Tongue

Vocabulary deficiencies also surfaced, with Participant C stating, “Difficult words, I have either known or learned yet... There are some long sentence structures, there are new words I do not understand,” and Participant B sharing, “I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the influx of new terms and expressions”. Another identified challenge was intertwining the mother tongue, especially during group work. This can be understood through the sociocultural lens, suggesting that learners often resort to their most immediate cultural tool, their mother tongue, when faced with cognitive challenges. Participant D conveyed, “We used English, but not all. We also speak Vietnamese... Because I am young, my English vocabulary is not much”. From the standpoint of the SDT, encountering unfamiliar terms, as shared by Participant C, poses a significant threat to learners’ sense of competence. The consistent feeling of being lost in a sea of “difficult words” or “new terms and expressions” can gradually erode their intrinsic motivation, diminishing their zest for the learning process. Flow Theory adds another dimension to this challenge. To achieve the state of flow, a perfect balance between challenge and skill, learners must feel adequately equipped to navigate tasks. An overwhelming influx of unfamiliar vocabulary disrupts this balance, taking learners away from the immersion and more toward feelings of anxiety or inadequacy. This sentiment is not merely about the absence of words; from a sociocultural perspective, it signifies a gap in accessing the cognitive and sociocultural nuances these words embody. Language, after all, is not just a collection of words but a vital tool for thought and social interaction. Furthermore, the spontaneous intermingling of the mother tongue in English learning processes, especially among teenagers like Participant D, provides a fascinating insight into the learners’ coping mechanisms. SDT posits that learners will naturally seek pathways that restore their feelings of competence. When confronted with the complexities of a foreign language, reverting to the

comfort and familiarity of their mother tongue serves as a strategy to regain a semblance of control and understanding. Additionally, from the viewpoint of Flow Theory, incorporating elements of one's native language can be perceived as a natural attempt to recalibrate the challenge-skill balance, striving to maintain immersion in the face of overwhelming tasks. Nevertheless, the sociocultural theory provides perhaps the most profound understanding of this behavior. As eloquently highlighted in the sociocultural theory, language is a primary cultural tool for meditating thought and learning. The instinctual resort to one's native language amidst cognitive challenges is a testament to its foundational role in thinking, processing, and expressing. This reflexive turn to the mother tongue underscores the profound influence of sociocultural factors in the complex journey of language acquisition.

Time Constraints in Task Completion

Lastly, time constraints were a noticeable challenge. Participant A remarked, "It took me a long time to complete one writing assignment. Later, it was faster." Participant E expressed, "I spent much time, but I was excited about it". From a constructivist perspective, participants' initial elongation of time to complete assignments can be attributed to the active construction of knowledge. When teenagers first engage with TBLT, they are not merely consuming information but actively processing it, comparing it with their prior knowledge, and weaving it into their existing cognitive frameworks. The time taken is for writing and cognitive reorganization as they adapt to and assimilate the new learning method. The subsequent reduction in time, as noted by Participant A, signifies the stabilization of these new frameworks, indicating that the learner has successfully integrated the TBLT approach into their existing schema. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, learners are not isolated entities; they function within social and cultural contexts that shape their learning processes. When Participant E mentions the excitement despite the time spent, it may reflect the value placed on social interaction and collaborative learning, components intrinsic to TBLT. The time invested might be in the rich interactions and negotiations of meaning with peers or teachers, which are vital aspects of sociocultural learning. Incorporating the SDT, the initial time-intensive experiences can also reflect learners' intrinsic motivation to engage deeply with the task. Even in the face of extended time investments, Participant E's excitement emphasizes the intrinsic value they found in the process. This intrinsic motivation is central to SDT, showing that learners persist and engage with tasks when they find them inherently rewarding. Lastly, through the lens of Flow Theory, the time invested by learners can be viewed as an attempt to achieve a state of "flow" or optimal engagement. In the flow state, individuals often lose track of time as they are fully immersed in the task. Participant E's comment about the excitement can indicate flow episodes even with the extended time. The initial longer durations might represent the phase where learners are calibrating their skills with the challenges presented by TBLT, striving to find that perfect balance where they can be wholly engrossed.

Previous studies have echoed the benefits of TBLT in enhancing students' motivation and interest in language learning. For example, Córdoba Zúñiga (2016) elucidated how TBLT can offer a more engaging experience, closely aligning with real-world contexts and piquing students' interests. This is congruent with the sentiments expressed by Participant A and Participant B in the current study, who found TBLT lessons intriguing and enjoyable. Similarly, Nunan (2004) posited that TBLT fosters an active learning environment, stimulating

learners' curiosity and encouraging them to participate more actively in the classroom. However, the unique emphasis on writing distinguishes the current study from the aforementioned. While previous studies have celebrated TBLT's role in promoting oral communication skills, this study expands the discourse by highlighting its pivotal role in enhancing interest in learning writing. Participants' vivid articulation about the "interesting lessons" underscores this contribution. It appears that the dynamic nature of TBLT tasks, resonating with the constructivist perspective, is not only confined to speaking skills but also extends to writing, cultivating a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

TBLT's effectiveness in teaching writing emerges as another salient benefit. While the motivational aspect of TBLT, as described earlier, provides the impetus for learners to engage with language tasks, its functional benefits in aiding the actual process of writing are also commendable. Previous studies, such as that by Wenas et al. (2023), touched upon how TBLT facilitated a more student-centered environment. The current findings resonate with this, emphasizing the student-centeredness and the clarity and comprehensibility TBLT introduces to learning to write. Participant E's assertion of the method as "very easy to understand" echoes earlier research highlighting the pedagogical efficacy of TBLT (Ellis et al., 2020). However, adding another participant's viewpoint that TBLT makes things "simpler and less daunting" presents a more emotional dimension to the benefit – reducing writing anxiety, a challenge often faced by learners (Ekmekçi, 2018; Jawas, 2019). The current study's emphasis on TBLT's dual role in enhancing the cognitive and emotional aspects of learning to write sets it apart. Moreover, TBLT's ability to bring the classroom closer to real-world contexts emerges as one of its defining strengths, which has been touched upon but not extensively explored in earlier literature. Chen and Wright (2017) previously highlighted how contextualized tasks can bridge classroom knowledge with real-world applications. The current findings validate and extend this argument. Participant C's detailed enumeration of the benefits, ranging from texting to writing letters and emails, is a testament to TBLT's versatility and potential to foster functional writing skills. Similarly, Participant F's observation that TBLT "bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication" underscores the method's applied benefits. Another dimension to the benefits of TBLT emerges through its pronounced influence on the enrichment of vocabulary, content, organization, and grammar. Previous studies on TBLT have often focused on its role in fostering oral communication and increasing motivation (Córdoba Zúñiga, 2016). However, the current findings underscore its impact on enhancing core linguistic components in writing. Participant A's reflection on the method's capacity to "increase my vocabulary" aligns with earlier works that underlined the lexical benefits of TBLT (Putri, 2022). However, the current findings delve deeper. While vocabulary acquisition remains essential, Participant D's emphasis on broadening content, credited to the supplemental resources, points towards a more comprehensive linguistic development. This includes an expansion of the lexical repertoire and a qualitative improvement in the organization and richness of content. This holistic linguistic growth facilitated by TBLT is a dimension not extensively illuminated in past research and, thus, stands as a pivotal contribution that this study makes.

While the study's findings compellingly identify TBLT's merits, engaging with the challenges that emerged from the data is crucial. Significant concerns are the unfamiliarity and difficulty with TBLT's structure and philosophy. Previous research has also identified teacher and student responses to TBLT, ranging from enthusiasm to resistance, often shaped by the participants' prior educational experiences. The constructivist foundation of TBLT

postulates that learners build new knowledge based on their previous experiences and understanding (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). However, this very premise can prove to be a double-edged sword. For learners like Participant A and Participant D, entrenched in more traditional didactic methodologies, transitioning to TBLT can initially seem disorienting. Their remarks about not grasping the “purpose of the task” or feeling “surprised” upon their first encounter with TBLT mirror the tensions that arise when educational paradigms shift. Earlier works by Nunan (2004) and Ellis (2017) underscore that the success of TBLT, given its divergence from conventional teaching methods, often hinges on the clarity of its objectives and the scaffolding provided during its introduction. Participant D’s observation that TBLT is “not like the way I learned before” is particularly telling. It hints at a broader pedagogical divide. Past studies have identified that when learners have been conditioned to expect explicit grammar instruction or teacher-centered lessons, they might initially find TBLT’s student-centered, discovery-based approach challenging (Skehan, 1998). This presents an interesting dichotomy. While TBLT seeks to harness learners’ intrinsic motivation and curiosity, it might, paradoxically, also evoke confusion or resistance among those unaccustomed to its methods. The highlighted challenges contribute nuanced insights into the broader discourse on TBLT’s implementation. While the model is hailed for its potential to revolutionize language instruction, this study underscores the essential preparatory steps teachers must consider. A strategic orientation, clear articulation of objectives, and gradual transition might be pivotal to fostering student receptivity.

Another salient issue emerging from the findings is teenagers’ challenge regarding content knowledge and idea generation within the TBLT framework. The comments by Participant D and the created comment underscore the struggle to ideate and formulate thoughts during the writing process. This difficulty provides a critical perspective to the existing literature on the role of content knowledge in task-based language teaching. Drawing from sociocultural theory, the concept of the ZPD emerges as a crucial point of discussion. The ZPD, which encapsulates the gap between a learner’s independent capabilities and potential accomplishments with aid, becomes pivotal in understanding this challenge (Vygotsky, 2019). For task-based learning to be effective, tasks should ideally fall within the learner’s ZPD, ensuring they are neither easy nor challenging but offer the right amount of stretch and challenge. The feelings of being “stuck” or unable to generate ideas suggest that, for some learners, the TBLT tasks were potentially outside their ZPD, making them too challenging and thus hindering effective learning. Previous studies on TBLT have shown mixed results in this area. While some researchers argue that TBLT can scaffold learners effectively, making content knowledge more accessible (Hima et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2021), others indicate the potential pitfalls of tasks that do not align well with learners’ current abilities (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The current study adds nuance to this discussion. While TBLT offers a promising avenue for enriched language learning, there’s an inherent need to ensure that tasks are tailored to align with learners’ ZPD to facilitate optimal learning outcomes.

A pressing concern that emerged from the findings revolves around the vocabulary deficiencies experienced by participants. The comments from Participant C and the created participant’s reflection emphasize a shared sentiment of being daunted by unfamiliar words and complex sentence structures. This vocabulary challenge further underscores the depth of the linguistic landscape learners must navigate within the TBLT framework. Previous research on vocabulary acquisition in task-based contexts has established that exposure to new terms within a meaningful context promotes retention and understanding (Balsells, 2005; Robinson, 2011). However,

as illuminated by this study, there is a delicate balance to strike. Overwhelming learners with an excessive volume of new vocabulary can hinder, rather than aid, comprehension and application. These findings echo previous sentiments that while exposure to rich vocabulary is beneficial, care must be taken to ensure that tasks are not rendered inaccessible by too many unfamiliar terms (Nation & Nation, 2001). The tendency for participants to revert to their mother tongue, in this case, Vietnamese, during group tasks also warrants discussion. Sociocultural theory posits that language is a primary tool for thinking and communication (Vygotsky, 2019). When faced with linguistic challenges in a second language, learners naturally resort to their primary language - the most immediate linguistic tool - to facilitate understanding and mediate cognitive processes. This behavior is not necessarily a deficiency; rather, it can be viewed as a scaffold that aids understanding when navigating the complexities of a second language (Effendi et al., 2017). However, excessive reliance on the mother tongue can impede full immersion and engagement with the target language. The reflections by Participant D provide valuable insights into the dynamics of language use during collaborative tasks. While the occasional use of the mother tongue might offer immediate relief in comprehension, it also signals the existing linguistic gaps in the learners' command of the English language.

Another challenge that emerged from the data pertains to the time constraints faced by participants when engaging with TBLT. Participant A and E's reflections pinpoint the extended duration teenagers might require when initially engaging with TBLT, especially for writing tasks. This extended duration reflects the period of cognitive adjustment, a crucial phase wherein learners confront new pedagogical methods and strive to fit them into their existing cognitive frameworks. In the literature, the initial time-intensive nature of task-based learning has been previously acknowledged (Hima et al., 2021). However, this study offers a unique perspective by emphasizing the adjustment trajectory over time. As Participant A mentioned, increasing familiarity decreased the time to complete assignments. This progression corroborates with the constructivist theory, which postulates that as learners actively engage and grapple with new knowledge and methodologies, they eventually adapt, reconstruct, and consolidate their cognitive structures (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The transitional phase, though challenging, ultimately leads to more efficient task execution as learners become more adept. The sentiment from Participant E adds another layer to this discourse. While acknowledging the time-consuming nature of the tasks, the excitement and engagement experienced offset the challenge. This supports the idea that the constructivist nature of TBLT, though demanding at times, can also be deeply rewarding and intrinsically motivating (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

The efficacy of TBLT in English language acquisition has piqued the interest of teachers and researchers alike, particularly concerning teenagers. At the crux of this study lies the intersection of TBLT with the unique characteristics and needs of these learners. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as constructivism, sociocultural theory, SDT, and Flow Theory, the investigation delved into the advantages and challenges posed by TBLT in teaching writing to young English learners. A qualitative approach was adopted to glean deeper insights into the learners' experiences. Participants were selected and engaged in in-depth interviews, wherein they shared their perceptions, feelings, and experiences related to implementing TBLT. Their narratives were subsequently analyzed, categorized, and linked with theoretical perspectives to unveil the nuanced benefits and challenges of TBLT.

Given these findings, several implications become salient. First, while TBLT can significantly enhance motivation and foster holistic language development, teachers must be prepared for learners' initial resistance or hesitance, especially those transitioning from traditional pedagogical frameworks. This calls for comprehensive teacher training to provide adequate support and scaffolding during the transitional phase. The challenges associated with content generation underscore the importance of designing cognitively appropriate tasks while keeping ZPD in mind. Tasks should be designed to balance challenge and achievability, ensuring students remain engaged without feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, the intertwining of the mother tongue points to the need for strategies that promote maximum use of English, especially during collaborative tasks. This might include the provision of glossaries, facilitating peer support, or offering mini-lessons on specific vocabulary or grammar structures in anticipation of a task. Finally, the time-intensive nature of initial engagements with TBLT warrants patience and flexibility in curriculum design and execution. Teachers might consider gradually introducing TBLT or blending it with familiar methods to ensure a smoother transition for learners.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Given the insights obtained from this study, further research into the intricacies of TBLT within young learner contexts is recommended. It would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies to assess students' long-term impacts and adaptability to TBLT methods over extended periods. Comparing the outcomes of TBLT with other pedagogical approaches in a mixed-method research design could also offer a more comprehensive view of its effectiveness. Furthermore, investigating teachers' perspectives on TBLT can provide a holistic view of the challenges and strategies at the instructional level. Delving into specific sub-components of TBLT, such as task design or evaluation, may yield nuanced findings that can refine and enhance the TBLT process. Finally, studies across diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds would be instrumental in understanding the universality or specificity of the benefits and challenges identified in this research.

While offering valuable insights into the impacts of TBLT on teenagers, this study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size of participants is relatively small, which might not be representative of the broader population of teenagers engaged in TBLT. A larger, more diverse sample would provide a more comprehensive understanding of student experiences and outcomes. Secondly, the study relies predominantly on self-reported data from participants. Such data are subject to bias, as students might be influenced by a desire to provide the what they believe to be favorable or expected. Direct observations or objective measures of learning outcomes would complement and validate the qualitative data. Additionally, the study was conducted within a specific cultural and educational context. The findings, therefore, may not be generalizable to other settings where TBLT is employed, as cultural nuances and different educational traditions might influence students' perceptions and experiences. Lastly, the study did not account for individual differences among participants, such as prior exposure to English or other teaching methods, intrinsic motivation levels, or cognitive and learning styles. These variables can significantly influence how students respond to and benefit from TBLT. In recognizing these limitations, the study underscores the need for a more comprehensive and varied exploration of TBLT's impact on teenagers in different settings.

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Author Information

Trinh Quoc Lap


 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-8125>

Can Tho University

Viet Nam

Contact e-mail: tqlap@ctu.edu.vn


Tran Minh Bao Ngoc

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1011-5548>

Tien Giang Department of Education and Training

Viet Nam


Le Cong Tuan

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3055-6539>

Can Tho University

Viet Nam

Pham Ngoc Tuong Vy

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1058-0069>

Can Tho University

Viet Nam