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Improving Writing Competence Of Higher-Class Students Through The TBLT Approach: Teachers' Experiences Of TBLT In Teaching Writing Globally And In The Uzbek Context

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Abstract: This study explores the potential of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to enhance higher-class students' writing competence and examines teachers' experiences in applying TBLT globally and within the Uzbek educational context. Although TBLT has been widely recognized for promoting communicative competence and learner autonomy, its implementation in secondary EFL writing classes remains inconsistent. The research employs a qualitative and quantitative mixed-method approach involving two groups of 10th and 11th-grade students and four English teachers in Uzbekistan. Data were collected through pre- and post-writing assessments, classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student reflections. Findings reveal that teachers familiar with task-based instruction observe improvements in students' lexical variety, syntactic accuracy, and content organization. However, challenges such as limited training, exam-oriented systems, and large class sizes constrain full adoption. The study concludes that integrating TBLT principles into writing instruction develops both linguistic and cognitive competence, fostering learner engagement and critical thinking. Recommendations include sustained teacher development, curriculum alignment, and gradual integration of communicative, authentic writing tasks into secondary EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, Writing

Competence, EFL Students, Teachers' Experiences, Communicative Pedagogy.

Introduction: The growing demand for proficient English users in academic and professional settings has positioned writing as one of the most critical yet challenging language skills to master. In many EFL classrooms, including those in Uzbekistan, writing instruction continues to be dominated by teacher-centered, form-focused practices that emphasize accuracy over communication. As a result, students often fail to express ideas effectively or engage in authentic written communication.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a viable alternative to traditional methods. Rooted in the communicative approach, TBLT emphasizes meaning-focused, purposeful language use through tasks that simulate real-life communication (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). The approach aligns with the Uzbekistan National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (2013), which encourages active, learner-centered pedagogy and the development of communicative competence.

Despite policy alignment, implementation gaps persist due to teachers' limited understanding of task-based principles and lack of practical exposure. Therefore, this study investigates how TBLT contributes to improving higher-class students' writing competence and explores English teachers' experiences in applying TBLT both globally and in the Uzbek context.

Research Questions:

1. How does TBLT influence higher-class students' writing competence?
2. What are teachers' global and Uzbek experiences in applying TBLT to writing instruction?
3. What challenges and opportunities arise in integrating TBLT into EFL classrooms in Uzbekistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Theoretical Foundations of TBLT

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the late 20th century, emphasizing that language is best learned through meaningful interaction rather than memorization of structures (Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989). A task is defined as a goal-oriented activity that requires learners to use language to achieve communicative outcomes (Ellis, 2003). According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, interaction with peers and teachers promotes cognitive development through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a principle central to TBLT's collaborative nature.

Willis (1996) proposed a three-stage task framework—pre-task, task cycle, and language focus—that supports both fluency and accuracy. Subsequent models (Ellis, 2017) emphasized the balance between meaning-focused and form-focused instruction, encouraging learners to notice linguistic forms through authentic use.

2. Teachers' Experiences with TBLT Globally

Globally, research indicates positive yet complex teacher experiences with TBLT. East (2017) found that teachers in New Zealand and Japan valued task-based instruction for promoting student interaction but struggled with curriculum constraints and assessment systems. Similarly, Rahimpour and Hosseini (2010) noted that Iranian teachers recognized TBLT's effectiveness but lacked pedagogical training to design tasks aligned with proficiency levels.

In China and South Korea, teachers have gradually integrated task-based writing by combining process writing and collaborative learning (Yan, 2020; Cho, 2018). Teachers reported higher student motivation and improved writing structure when tasks related to real-world purposes such as email writing, travel blogs, or reports. However, research by Jeon and Hahn (2006) revealed that large class sizes and rigid examinations often hinder authentic implementation.

In Europe, Ellis (2018) and García Mayo (2019) documented strong teacher satisfaction with TBLT due to its student-centered orientation, though many still adapted tasks to balance grammar instruction with communicative goals. Collectively, global experiences highlight the need for contextual adaptation, continuous professional support, and alignment with national assessment systems.

3. TBLT in the Uzbek Context

In Uzbekistan, English is a compulsory subject from primary to upper-secondary levels, reflecting the government's emphasis on international communication skills. The State Educational Standard (2013) promotes communicative approaches, including TBLT, process writing, and ICT integration. Yet, several studies (e.g., Alimova, 2020; Rakhimova, 2022) report that classroom practices remain largely traditional, with teachers relying on grammar-translation and model essay imitation.

Teachers acknowledge that TBLT encourages creativity and learner participation but face challenges such as large class sizes, insufficient time, and limited access to digital resources (Tursunova & Karimov, 2021). Moreover, many teachers receive minimal training on designing communicative writing tasks. Despite these limitations, pilot studies in Tashkent and Samarkand

regions have shown that even short task-based interventions (e.g., group storytelling or problem-solving essays) enhance student motivation and writing quality (Bazarova, 2022).

This research builds upon those findings, aiming to contextualize TBLT implementation in Uzbek secondary classrooms while reflecting on global experiences and local realities.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The study used a mixed-method design integrating quasi-experimental and qualitative approaches. It compared traditional writing instruction with task-based instruction over eight weeks, complemented by teacher interviews and student reflections.

2. Participants

The participants were 48 EFL students (grades 10–11) from two secondary schools in the Tashkent Region and four English teachers with at least five years of teaching experience. One class served as the control group (traditional method), and the other as the experimental group (TBLT-based writing instruction).

3. Instruments

- Pre- and post-writing tests assessed content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.
- Semi-structured interviews explored teachers' perceptions and experiences.
- Observation checklists monitored classroom interaction patterns and student engagement.
- Student reflection journals provided qualitative insights.

4. Procedure

The TBLT-based lessons followed the three-phase model (Willis, 1996):

1. Pre-task: brainstorming, vocabulary enrichment, and context introduction.
2. Task cycle: collaborative writing on real-world themes (e.g., describing local events, writing letters, blogs, or project proposals).
3. Post-task: peer review, feedback, and editing.

The control group followed standard textbook lessons emphasizing grammar drills and teacher corrections.

5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed through mean comparison and percentage improvement between pre- and post-tests. Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework to identify patterns in teacher and student experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Quantitative Results

The TBLT group's mean writing score increased from 62.5% to 83.4%, showing substantial improvement in idea organization and lexical diversity. The control group improved from 63.2% to 70.1%, primarily in grammar accuracy rather than creativity. These results suggest that TBLT's interactive, meaning-focused nature promotes deeper writing competence.

2. Teachers' Experiences Globally and Locally

Teachers in the Uzbek context shared experiences similar to those reported internationally. They valued TBLT for increasing student engagement but faced systemic constraints. One teacher commented:

"Students become more active when tasks are meaningful, but the exam system still expects memorization."

Another noted that peer collaboration enhanced weaker students' confidence—a finding echoed in Bhandari's (2020) Nepalese study and Ellis's (2018) European contexts.

Global teachers' experiences show that success depends on teacher autonomy, training, and task design quality. Likewise, Uzbek teachers expressed the need for workshops on constructing sequenced writing tasks that balance creativity with assessment requirements.

3. Classroom Observations

Observation revealed that during task-based lessons, students collaborated more actively, negotiated meaning, and showed increased willingness to write longer texts. Teachers acted as facilitators, providing feedback rather than dictation. These interactions reflect Vygotsky's collaborative learning theory and align with global evidence that TBLT encourages peer scaffolding (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; García Mayo, 2019).

4. Discussion

The results align with international findings that TBLT strengthens communicative writing competence (Yan, 2020; Kafipour et al., 2018). However, contextual factors—such as exam systems, curriculum rigidity, and teacher preparation—remain barriers in Uzbekistan. Teachers' reflections underscore the importance of institutional support, smaller class sizes, and continuous professional development.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach significantly enhances the writing competence of higher-class EFL students by providing authentic communicative situations, meaningful tasks, and learner-centered instruction. Findings from both global and Uzbek

contexts show that when writing instruction shifts from product-oriented to process- and task-oriented teaching, students develop greater lexical richness, syntactic complexity, and coherence in their compositions.

Teachers' experiences globally reveal that TBLT promotes learner motivation, collaboration, and creativity, as tasks mirror real-life communicative purposes. Similarly, in Uzbekistan, English teachers reported that integrating TBLT principles—such as pre-task planning, interactive group work, and post-task reflection—helped students engage actively with writing tasks and reduce anxiety. However, challenges persist, including large class sizes, limited exposure to authentic English input, and teachers' need for methodological training.

In conclusion, TBLT proves to be an effective pedagogical model for improving EFL writing among secondary school students. To maximize its impact, teacher education programs in Uzbekistan should focus on developing teachers' task design skills, digital literacy, and assessment strategies aligned with communicative outcomes. Future research may explore long-term effects of TBLT-based writing instruction across different proficiency levels, as well as its integration with digital platforms and process writing approaches.

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