



Task-Based Learning Teaching and its Implications for Syllabus Design in Adult Writing Instruction

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An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide featuring flowing, wavy lines in various shades of purple, blue, and white, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Task-Based Learning Teaching

Across the world there is now widely held agreement that **the fundamental goal** of teaching and learning in language programs should be to help students to develop their **communicative competence** in the target language. The communicative agenda has been realized in classrooms in a range of ways, and **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)** is one such realization.

Structure of the Project Proposal

Aims of the Investigation

Research Questions

- 1 Does the application of the **TBLT** method have a **positive impact** on the learning outcomes of adult learners' **writing skills**?
- 2 How does TBLT affect adult **learners' motivation** in writing?
- 3 What are the **implications of syllabus design** in TBLT teaching?

Research Objectives

- 1 This research aims to **investigate the effectiveness** of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in **promoting writing** skills in adult learners.
- 2 The research project will focus on **the use of TBLT** to design engaging and **relevant writing activities for adult learners**.
- 3 The proposed research will **analyze the implications of TBLT for syllabus design** in adult writing instruction.

The Rationale and Main Conceptual Themes for the Investigation

Constructivism and Language Learning

Constructivism in education emphasizes that **learners construct new knowledge through experiences and social context**, integrating new information with **previous knowledge** (Piaget, 1968).

In the context of English language teaching, **learners** can construct their own knowledge through **social interaction and collaborative learning activities**, such as group work.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT emphasizes **the development of communicative competence** through **authentic communication situations** where learners utilize the target language to convey information.

The strong version emphasizes **tasks** as the **central** organizing principle of language instruction. (Howatt, 1984)

The weak version uses tasks as a **supplementary** teaching method. (Howatt, 1984)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT goes further, expecting learners to communicate to accomplish or complete **a meaningful task**.

A number of different versions of TBLT have been proposed, ranging from **a strong version** (*task-based teaching*; see Willis, 1996) to **a weaker version** (*task-supported teaching*; see Ellis, 2003).

Whereas **the former** sees **tasks** as the **central component of syllabus design**, **the latter** uses **tasks for communicative practice** in conjunction with a grammar- or function-based syllabus.

Action Research

This action research study will employ **the cyclical process** proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1992), which involved **planning, taking action, observing, and reflecting**.

Description of the Evidence to Collect

This investigation will collect evidence from the following sources:

- i) The previous studies have focused on the language teaching and application of TBLT in writing activities for adults
- ii) Field notes by researcher
- iii) Learners' progress through the results of pretest and post test
- iv) The change of learners' motivation in writing activities by using questionnaire

Methods to Collect Evidence

This investigation will use the following methods to collect evidence:

- i) Literature review:** To conduct a comprehensive review of relevant literature on social constructivism, syllabus design, and TBLT as well as its effectiveness in promoting writing skills in adult learners.
- ii) Field notes:** One of the important resource of data collected for qualitative analysis in TBLT research is the field-notes through observations, experiences and reflections.
- iii) Pre- and post-tests:** Administer pretests and posttests to adult learners in TBLT writing classes. Mark the tests based on the Analytic Marking Scale adopted from Hughey et al. (1983), which consists of five dimensions (content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics).
- iv) Pre- and post-questionnaire:** In this study, the similarities and differences in the learners' writing motivation towards writing activities before and after the research will be measured through open-ended questionnaires.

Description of the Settings to Collect Evidence

For this study, I will recruit participants from an adult education center in China, as these are motivated learners who have a specific purpose for their studies.

To select participants, **Preliminary English Test (PET)** will be used to select **homogenous participants** and measuring their progress. The research will then **randomly assign these participants into three groups of equal size: the control group (CG, using traditional teaching method) , and the experimental group one (EG1, using strong version TBLT) and the experimental group two (EG2, using weak version TBLT)**. The participants must be **above 18 years old**, if possible, I will aim to recruit participants with an average age range.

Ethical Issues

Informed consent: All adult learners should be fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research, and their voluntary participation should be obtained through informed consent.

Confidentiality: The privacy of the participants should be protected, and any identifying information should be kept confidential. Meanwhile, participants should be informed of the data collection process and data protection measures.

Deception: Any form of deception should be avoided and unacceptable in the research study.

Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity: The research should be conducted in a manner that respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the participants. The research won't discriminate against or marginalize either CG, EG 1 or EG 2.

Institutional review: The research study should be approved by an institutional review board or ethics committee to ensure that it meets ethical guidelines and standards.

Data protection: Any data collected from participants should be stored securely, and only used for the purposes of the research. Participants should have the right to access and withdraw their data at any time.

The right of withdraw: The participants will be given the rights to withdraw from the research at any stage and can make a complaint regarding to their involvement in the research.

Methods to Analyse the Evidence Collected

Quantitative methods provide a **general understanding** of learner **personal constructs**; whereas **qualitative methods** provide **detail and in-depth insights** into the **constructs**. And this project will adopt a **mixed methodology**. Following Grotjahn’s (1987) research paradigms and Nunan’s (1992) distinctions among pre-experiments, quasi-experiments, and true experiments, this research is pre-experimental-qualitative-interpretive.

Type	Characteristics
Pre-experiment	may include pre- and post-treatment tests but do not have a control group for comparison.
Quasi-experiment	includes both pre- and post-tests as well as experimental and control groups but lacks random assignment of subjects.
True experiment	incorporates both pre- and post-tests, experimental and control groups, and has also ensured random assignment of subjects.

i) To analyze the quantitative data

Quantitative analysis will be applied, which involves analyzing numerical data using statistical methods collected from **the results of pre- and post- tests**. **One-way ANOVA** will be used to identify differences and draw conclusions according to the results of these two tests. And **correlation coefficient (r)** will be applied to reflect the correlation between learners’ writing motivation and test results through questionnaires.

ii) To analyze the qualitative data

The qualitative data, including **pre- and post- questionnaires and field notes**, will be analyzed with **Nvivo**. First, all the data will be coded and categorized into two themes: a) motivation towards TBLT; b) TBLT. The qualitative data will help to explore the reasons behind the changes in writing motivation observed in the study. Additionally, it will provide insights into which version of TBLT, the strong or weak version, is preferred by the learners.

Timetable for the Proposed Project

The process of data collection and analysis is expected to take approximately **6 months** to complete, excluding literature review and final writing which may take a longer time to finish (nearly two years to complete the whole dissertation).

The proposed timetable is as follows:



References

Piaget, Jean (1968). *Six Psychological Studies*. Anita Tenzer (Trans.), New York: Vintage Books.

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Hughey, J. B. (1983). *Teaching ESL Composition: Principles and Techniques*. Newbury House Publishers.

Nunan, D., & Nunan, P. D. (1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.