Using Task-Based Language Teaching in English Writing Classrooms: Students' Perception of Motivation, Writing Behavior, and Challenges

Davut Nhem

Department of English, Norton University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
davut_nhem124@yahoo.com

Abstract

For decades, task-based language teaching has become a commodity in ELT profession and has been the subject of many studies. Yet, there seems to be a paucity of research on the impact of TBLT on enhancing learners' motivation in learning writing. In this regard, this article presents the results of student's perceptions of the intervention of TBLT in teaching writing in two English classes for one academic term at one institution in Phnom Penh. The study examined the students' perceptions regarding the impact of TBLT on their writing behaviors and motivation in learning writing before and after the intervention, as well as the constraints that they encountered during the implementation of TBLT. The results indicate positive-but-varying views regarding this intervention. Some challenges are also detected and suggestions are offered for future research in this area accordingly. The study has implications for EFL writing classrooms.

Keywords: *Task-Based Language Teaching; Writing; Motivation*

Introduction

In the last few decades or so, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained a high profile in the English language teaching (ELT) industry (e.g. Carless, 2007; Ellis, 2011; 2006; Hawkes, 2015; & Willis & Willis, 2013). TBLT develops a strong view of communicative language teaching (CLT) and aims at developing students' linguistic repertoire of a second language by allowing students to get involved in a deluge of activities in the classroom (Ellis, 2011 & Richards, 2006;). As such, language learning is a result of constructing appropriate communicative activities in the classroom (Richards, 2006), indicating a form of promoting learner-centeredness, in which students are more active in the learning process. Besides, TBLT also focuses on the use of authentic materials, language skills, cognitive processes (Ellis, 2003) in teaching language and promotes meaningful communication. During the implementation of tasks, students can get more exposure to the target language through reading or listening; this exposure could help them observe and notice how meaning is expressed (Willis, 1996). The exposure of the target language could furthermore help learners develop learning outputs effectively. In this respect, the popularity of TBLT has subverted traditional teaching methods, e.g., Grammar Translation, in which learning takes place through the memorization of rules or structures. Thus, TBLT is usually favored in grammar teaching (see Long, 2000; Richards, 2006; and Huang, 2010) and by focusing on meaning to facilitate the process of acquiring a new language form. Richards (2006) states that the development of grammar and other domains of communicative competence can be done by preparing learners to take part in communicative activities.

While much has been written about TBLT in teaching grammar, research investigating the impacts of the use of TBLT in teaching writing in the ELT classroom has remained underrepresented in the literature and requires more empirical studies in different contexts. Dörnyei (1994) proposes that teachers should introduce learning tasks in a means that arouses students' intrinsic motivation, which later on helps enhance their extrinsic motivation. This implies that the use of tasks in teaching English is pivotal for developing student's motivation. Thereby, the use of TBLT should be supportive in terms of stimulating students' interest and motivation in learning writing. However, in the Cambodian context where students are typically seen as passive learners who appreciate the value of knowledge transformation from the teacher (Howes & Ford, 2011), the presence of TBLT in the classroom might encounter both merits and challenges. A recent study (Nhem, 2019)

reported that Cambodian teachers and students were likely to hold positive attitudes toward group/pair work activities in the classroom and the role of learners and the teacher, both of whom are the knowledge constructors in the classroom, yet the results remain aspirational and entail further study, particularly from students' perception after having experienced with practices (TBLT). Carless (2012) also argues that despite the fact TBLT is of popularity, the adaptation of TBLT for diverse educational settings is subject to further consideration provided that language learning is to be effective. In this regard, the current study aimed to implement TBLT in the ELT classroom in the Cambodian context and to determine students' interest in learning writing. In other words, this study sought to address whether the students' interest in learning writing changes with the implementation of TBLT. To meet this objective, the following questions have been raised to be answered:

1. What are the students' perceptions about TBLT before and after the intervention?
2. What are the students' behaviors toward learning writing before and after the intervention of TBLT?
3. What are the constraints the students face during the TBLT practices?

Literature Review

What is Task-Based Language Teaching?

TBLT has been long endorsed by several advocates (e.g. Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989; 2004; Prabhu, 1987; & Willis, 1996) in the ELT industry. These proponents have striven to propose different definitions and models of TBLT in the ELT. For instance, Prabhu (1987, p. 24) comments that:

> an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a task.

This definition indicates that task is a kind of activity which requires students' cognitive process (thinking) to achieve the desirable result while the teacher plays the role as the controller of the process of the task. Similarly to Prabhu, Nunan (1989, p. 10) defines task as:

> a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on the meaning rather than form.

Nunan's definition has placed more emphasis on interactive activities and thinking to achieve the meaning of the language rather than form. Students are more given a sense of autonomy in the learning process. Therefore, the methodological framework of communicative tasks Nunan (1989, p. 11) takes into consideration six principals: "*goal, input, activities, teacher role, learner role, and settings*". However, in the later model of TBLT, Nunan (2004) has recognized the significance of focus-on form in the ELT. The framework of TBLT includes enabling skills that lie on a continuum from language exercise activities to communicative activities. Another proponent of TBLT, Willis (1996) refers tasks to all kinds of activities that require learners to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes and the results. This definition views tasks by taking into account of goal, meaning, and language. Tasks should be goal-oriented and attainable through the use of language in a meaningful means. The current study adopted Willis's (1996) view of TBLT because his definition allows structuring the tasks into three phases: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. In the pre-task phase, students are presented topic, task, and possibly some related words or phrases for the task. The second phase allows learners to use the existing knowledge of the language to perform the task with the guidance from the teacher. It could be stated that this phase provides students with a holistic experience of learning the language. The last phase draws the students' attention to look closely at the language elements embedded in the task carried out in the period of task-cycle. At this stage, students are already familiar with language features that have been contextualized through the task. Thus, it would provide students with ease to analyze the language features at this point.

Benefits of Task-Based Language Teaching

The popularity of TBLT is probably because of its considerable benefits. In this regard, Willis (1996) points out that TBLT provides language learners with four effective conditions for language learning to take place, namely exposure, language use, motivation, and instruction. For Willis, TBLT allows learners to involve in the target language through listening or reading or both. This involvement will, later on, help learners produce learning output (use of language). That is, the exposure permits students to have more room to negotiate and understand the meaning of the given tasks or the meaning expressed by the partner who performs the same task, receive both implicit and explicit feedback from peers or teacher, notice the gap between the learner's production and the input given, and consolidate memories of the previous language

productions (Robinson, 2011). The exposure and use of the target language will also increase students' level of motivation (Robinson, 2011; & Willis, 1996) and minimize teacher's instruction (Willis, 1996). In teaching writing, research (e.g. Lam & Law, 2007; & Tran, 2007) has found that learning tasks are of importance for driving learners' motivation. Lam and Law (2007) added that learning-writing tasks should be challenging and related to real-life experience.

Research (Douglas & Kim, 2014) also revealed that TBLT is effective for language instruction. Douglas and Kim claim that students experienced achievement and process in their learning. Another study (Bao & Du, 2015), showed that students perceived an increase in classroom participation and opportunities to practice the target language, minimized their anxiety, and enjoyed learning in the classroom. In addition, the other benefit of TBLT is concerned with the role of the teacher and learners (Nunan, 2004). Nunan suggests that in TBLT students should be involved in making choices regarding what and how to learn. This implies a shift in the learner role and teacher role in the classroom. Students take more control of their own learning process while the teacher acts as the facilitator. Simply put, TBLT is a more student-centered approach (Ellis, 2009). This is evidenced in research by Douglas & Kim (2014). Douglas and Kim have reported that most teachers perceived TBLT as a learner-centered approach because it allows learners to get involved more in learning activities. Activities carried out by students can also refer to the authenticity of tasks, which require students to interact and engage in their learning process (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Such evidence can merit the use of TBLT in teaching writing to enhance students' level of motivation in learning.

Constraints of Task-Based Language Teaching

While the benefits of TBLT have been observed, there might be certain constraints when implementing TBLT. One possible concern is the use of the mother tongue during tasks (e.g. Carless, 2002; & Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). Research by Carless (2002) indicated that students attempted to use the mother tongue (Cantonese) more than English while carrying on tasks. This shows that English language learning is not much promoted and would result in less target language production. Carless (2002) concludes that there are two main reasons which influence the use of the mother tongue. The first issue is the task requiring complex linguistic needs and open-ended task while the second one is the students' language proficiency. That is, students might

not be able to figure out suitable words to put into discourse (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). However, Carless (2003) argues that students' language proficiency causing a challenge in implementing TBLT is a fallacy. Carless (2003) suggests that teachers could have more preparation (e.g. drilling or practicing on language items) for students before a task is kicked off. Together, tasks should be aligned with the level of students' language proficiency (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). Other aspects such as classroom management (Carless 2004; 2002), students' involvement (Carless 2002), the availability of time (Bao & Du, 2015; Douglas & Kim, 2014; & Yen, 2016) and students' learning styles (Bao & Du, 2015; & Douglas & Kim, 2014) could be the hassles of implementing TBLT. Moreover, Yen (2016) who compared TBLT and PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) in teaching writing also concerned over students' motivation in learning after realizing that the students had to revise their writing texts several times. These constraints are voiced by teachers only while learners' perspectives on these concerns have not been discovered by the previous studies.

Methodology

The Setting and Participants

Using a quantitative research approach, this study comparing students' perceptions about TBLT in teaching writing before and after the intervention was conducted for one term (three months) in two classes at a private university in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The university offered a range of education educational services (e.g., General English Program, Bachelor Programs, Master and PhD programs). This study was conducted in the General English Program. Thirty-six (pre-test) and thirty-three (post-test) students who involved in the intervention responded to the questionnaire (see Table 1), and sixteen students returned the open-ended questions with comments. The distribution of the participants' gender was almost equal while the age group was mostly between eighteen and early twenty. Those students were studying English in level 4 and had basic communication in English.

Table 1
A Summary of Demographic Information of the Participants

Category	Sub-category	Pre-Test (N=36)		Post-Test (N=33)	
		Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender	Female	19	53%	18	55%
	Male	17	47%	15	45%
Age	17 or below	4	11%	5	15%
	18-20	23	64%	20	61%
	21-25	8	22%	8	24%
	26 or above	1	3%	0	0%
Class	Class A	19	53%	18	55%
	Class B	17	47%	15	45%

Intervention procedure

A series of TBLT lesson models was prepared to teach students writing at the end of each unit (six units), which means the students had already learned essential structures and vocabulary related to writing. The lessons were developed based on the theoretical framework of Willis (1996) who proposed TBLT into three phases: pre-task phase, task cycle phase, and language focus phase (see Table 2).

Table 2
A Summary of Task-Based Language Teaching in Writing

Phases	Descriptions
Pre-Task	Teacher introduces task(s).
	Some new words are presented.
Task-Cycle	**Task**: Students work on task(s) in pairs or groups.
	Planning: Students discuss and prepare their reports.
	Report: Students present their reports.
Language Focus	**Analysis:** Examining students' report and a writing model (in a text) to check the structure of writing.
	Practice: Do brainstorming by answering questions; writing a paragraph individually; presenting the written paper.

In this study, the students were provided with different tasks (e.g. reading, listening, speaking, and writing) to work on. All the tasks were built upon each and provided rich linguistic knowledge for the students to carry out the writing tasks. For the writing tasks, you were advised to choose a topic that was related to the lesson they had studied in the class. For instance, in the pre-task the teacher introduced a topic (e.g., restaurant experiences and new words). During the task-cycle, students read and answered the text and then presented their answers to the class, followed by pair/group discussions and listening activities. Finally, they worked on a writing model and answered some questions, which later on were used for doing brainstorming and guiding the writing tasks. In the language focus phase, the teacher and students examined the structure of the writing model (e.g. how to write a restaurant review), which later on the students followed the writing model with some guided questions to write their paragraph. After writing, students presented their paper to the class, which could be done in different ways. For instance, the writing papers were displayed on the wall and students visited them. They were also suggested to take notes and reported to the class what they had learned. After the presentation, the papers were collected and comments were given for the improvement.

Instrument and data analysis

The questionnaire with the translation in Khmer (the native language of the students) was developed and consisted of three parts: perceptions about TBLT; students' behaviors about writing; and learning constraints. Part one and three were adapted from Zhu-Xiu's (2016) study. Some follow-up questions were included in the questionnaire to allow the students to write a reflection about their learning experiences. The questionnaire was sent to an expert for comments and revised accordingly before the implementation. However, part three was included in the post-test survey only.

The survey data were entered into SPSS version 23 for the analysis, and the descriptive statistics were reported in means, standard deviation, p-value, and degree of freedom. All items were reported individually and combined into categories which include: perceptions toward TBLT (items 1-10), students' behaviors toward writing (items 11-20) and their challenges about TBLT. All statements were rated by a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The negative statements (5 & 6) were reversed before combining into groups. To analyze the data, an independent samples T-test was used to compare the pre-test and post-test data. The data obtained from the open-ended

questions were entered in NVivo version 11 to be analyzed and coded into themes. The name of each student was also coded as S1, S2, S3,…, S16.

Results

Students' perceptions of TBLT

The results of the pre-test survey indicated that the students were likely to hold positive views toward TBLT in teaching writing (total M=3.96; SD=.374). Unfortunately, after receiving the intervention of TBLT, the post-test results showed some changes in their perceptions in certain aspects (e.g. items 1, 3, 5, 8, & 9). Statistical significance between the pre-test and post-test results was also found among these items (p<.05). For instance, there was a statistical difference in students' beliefs on the use of TBLT to provide a relaxing atmosphere and promote English language use (M=4.04 for pre-test; M=3.64 for post-test), and p=.003. The degree of freedom is 67 and the effect size, *d*, is .6, indicating medium size effect. For item 5 because it is a negative one, the decrease means a positive perception toward TBLT. Other aspects (e.g. the development of integrated skills, language fluency and accuracy, promoting learning progress, and improving interaction skills) were also statistically found to decrease after the intervention (p<.05) (*see Table 3*).

While the post-test results of the above-mentioned aspects were decreased, other aspects (e.g., items 2, 4, 6, 7, & 10) remained the same after the intervention. For example, students still believed that TBLT activates students' motivation in learning although there was a slight decrease in the mean score (M=3.97 for pre-test; M=3.91 for post-test). No statistical difference was observed (p=.705). More interestingly, the students were more likely to perceive that TBLT recognizes the importance of grammar or structures (M=3.64 for pre-test; M=4.15 for post-test). Statistical difference was also observed (p=.017). The degree of freedom is 67, and the effect size, d, is .5, considered as a small size effect. The students even more disagreed that TBLT is not proper for controlling classroom arrangements (M=2.44 for pre-test; M=2.39 for post-test) although there was no statistical difference (p=.787). Similarly, even though no statistical difference was observed (p=.399), the students were more likely to believe that TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment such as group or pair work (M=4.11 for pre-test; M=4.24 for post-test).

Table 3.
Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test On TBLT

Items	Test	M	SD	df	p	d
1. TBLT provides a relaxing atmosphere to promote the target language use.	Pre-Test	4.08	.649	6	.003	.6
	Post-Test	3.64	.549	7		
2. TBLT activates learners' motivation in learning.	Pre-Test	3.97	.654	6	.705	.1
	Post-Test	3.91	.723	7		
3. TBLT pursues the development of integrated skills in the classroom.	Pre-Test	4.25	5.78	6	.001	.1
	Post-Test	3.52	.962	5		
4. TBLT recognizes the importance of grammar/structures.	Pre-Test	3.64	.899	6	.017	.5
	Post-Test	4.15	.834	7		
5. *Learners will not be able to do a task unless their English is fully fluent and accurate.	Pre-Test	2.81	1.14	6	.033	.5
	Post-Test	3.42	1.23	7		
6. * TBLT is not proper for controlling classroom arrangements.	Pre-Test	2.44	.877	6	.787	.1
	Post-Test	2.39	.844	5		
7. TBLT materials should be meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context.	Pre-Test	3.91	.887	6	.093	.3
	Post-Test	3.58	.672	4		
8. TBLT promotes learners' academic progress.	Pre-Test	4.44	.735	6	.005	.7
	Post-Test	3.91	.805	7		
9. TBLT improve learners' interaction skills.	Pre-Test	4.42	.841	6	.001	.7
	Post-Test	3.76	.663	7		
10. TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment (e.g. pairs or groups).	Pre-Test	4.11	.667	6	.399	.1
	Post-Test	4.24	.614	7		
Total of Items	Pre-Test	3.96	.374	6	.003	.6
	Post-Test	3.70	.339	7		

The comparison of the overall mean scores of the pre-test and post-test results revealed a significant decrease (M=3.96 for pre-test; M=3.70 for post-test), and P=.003. The degree of freedom is 67, and the effect size, d, is .6. However, although the statistical significance of this decline was witnessed, the mean of the post-test survey remained positive and was slightly below that of the pre-test survey. Therefore, it could be concluded that using TBLT in teaching writing has been perceived positively by the students.

Similar results were also observed in the follow-up questions. The sixteen students responded that they were stratified with the implementation of TBLT since it provided them the opportunities to practice their English through speaking and writing activities. Other aspects (e.g. grammar & listening) were also included in the TBLT

activities. Through those activities, they could develop their confidence, communication skills, and create an interactive learning atmosphere in the classroom. They believed that TBLT can motivate students to learn English, especially writing better. Below are some examples of the students' comments:

I feel that TBLT helped me learn English well because when I wrote in English it helped me learn English more, especially new words that I did not know before. TBLT helped me improve my writing before than before. Moreover, it helped me improve my speaking too. (S1)

I think that TBLT helps develop English language better because it teaches us about reading, grammar, listening, and writing. Especially, group work can allow us to exchange ideas with our partners. (S16)

Students' behaviors toward writing

The results of the pre-test and post-test of students' behaviors on learning writing indicated that the students were likely to hold positive behaviors toward learning writing (*see Table 4*). However, the students seemed to change their attitudes toward writing after the intervention for some aspects. Three items (12, 16, &17) were found a statistical difference (p<.05). For instance, the pre-test results indicated that students highly enjoyed writing in English (M=4.17) but this behavior tended to decline after the intervention (M=3.63), and p=.000. Moreover, the students perceived highly that looking at a writing model can make them write better (M=4.03 for pre-test), which was likely to decrease (M=3.33), and p=.002. There was a decline of students' behavior toward discussing ideas with other students (M=4.11 for pre-test; M=3.52 for post-test), and p=.002.

Other aspects (e.g. items 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, & 20) were observed a slight decrease in students' behavior, but no statistical significance was detected (p>0.5). This indicated that students' behaviors toward these aspects remained stable. For example, the students still agreed that they were willing to write in English (M=4.17 for pre-test; M=3.93 for post-test, and p=.249. These statistics are not significant, and therefore there is no difference in the students' behavior toward their willingness to write in English. More remarkably, the students seemed to highly perceive that they have to more ideas to write after the intervention (M=3.14 for pre-test; M=3.48 for post-test). There is a likelihood of statistical significance (p=.056). For working with other students, needing help from others, and being motivated when working in groups or pairs, the students were likely to remain positive because no statistical significance was detected.

Table 4

Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test on Writing Behaviors

Items	Test	M	SD	df	p	d
11. I am willing to write in English.	Pre-Test	4.17	.845	6		.3
	Post-Test	3.93	.766	2	.249	
12. I enjoy writing in English.	Pre-Test	4.19	.624	6		.9
	Post-Test	3.63	.609	6	.000	
13. I can write as much as possible.	Pre-Test	3.14	.798	6		.4
	Post-Test	3.48	.667	7	.056	
14. I have more ideas to write.	Pre-Test	3.11	.667	6		.0
	Post-Test	3.10	.548	4	.942	
15. I can write better when I work with other students.	Pre-Test	3.69	.920	6		.1
	Post-Test	3.58	1.01	7	.610	
16. I can write better when I look at a writing model.	Pre-Test	4.03	.654	6		1
	Post-Test	3.33	1.11	7	.002	
17. I can write better when I discuss ideas with other students.	Pre-Test	4.11	.708	6		.8
	Post-Test	3.52	.834	7	.002	
18. I need help from the teacher or peers when I write in English.	Pre-Test	4.00	.862	6		.2
	Post-Test	3.79	.927	7	.328	
19. I am motivated to write when I work in a group or pair.	Pre-Test	3.72	.741	6		.2
	Post-Test	3.58	.867	7	.452	
20. I can write better when I read a text or listen to a recording.	Pre-Test	3.83	.811	6		.3
	Post-Test	3.61	.747	7	.232	
Total of Items	Pre-Test	3.80	.334	6		.7
	Post-Test	3.56	.383	7	.007	

The comparison of the overall means of pre-test and post-test results revealed a statistical difference between students' behaviors toward writing before and after the intervention (M=3.80 for pre-test; M=3.56 for post-test) and p=.007. The degree of freedom is 67, and the effect size, d, is. However, although the post-test results indicated a decrease in students' behaviors toward writing, the means of both tests were slightly different and the mean of post-test remained positive. Thereby, students' behaviors toward learning writing can be considered as positive even after the intervention of TBLT.

The follow-up questions further indicated positive results regarding students' writing behaviors after the intervention of TBLT. All students commented TBLT has improved their writing and motivation in learning. They explained that made few mistakes during writing because they had learned some new words and writing structures. Besides, they could exchange ideas for writing from their peers during group discussions. The students also expressed their willingness and motivation to learn writing. Below are some comments from the students:

For my writing after learning with TBLT, I feel that my writing is better than before. I don't make many mistakes, could think of other words to write and have more ideas to write. After learning with TBLT, I am more interested in learning writing. (S2)

For my writing, I feel it has been improved more than before because it (TBLT) helped me learn some words during my writing. I feel that I want to write in English because it helped me know weaknesses and strengths about my writing when the teacher checked my writing and provided feedback. (S7)

Students' constraints on TBLT

Table 5 shows the results of students' constraints during the implementation of TBLT in the classroom. The results indicated that the students were not likely to face any challenges during the intervention of TBLT. For example, they felt positive about being used to TBLT (M=2.52) and found it was not difficult to understand the lesson with TBLT (M=2.67). The students did not face any difficulties in participating in pair or group discussions too (M=2.30). Other aspects (e.g. teaching materials, classroom size, classroom management, assessment learning performance, limited language proficiency) were not found as challenges for these students.

However, only two factors (items 29 & 30) were revealed as

difficulties for the students. The students seemed not to speak English much due to the limitation of linguistic knowledge (M=3.52; SD=.755), and therefore they mixed L1 and L2 during the tasks (M=3.19; SD=.792). Therefore, these results indicated that the students did not face many challenges with the use of TBLT. This means that TBLT is positively welcomed by the students, especially in teaching writing.

Table 5
Students' Constraints on TBLT

Items	Min	Max	M	SD
21. I am not used to task-based language teaching.	1	5	2.52	1.034
22. It is hard for me to understand the lesson with TBLT.	1	4	2.67	.595
23. I have difficulties in participating discussions, e.g. pairs/groups.	1	5	2.30	1.015
24. Materials in textbook are not proper for using TBLT.	1	4	2.30	.847
25. Large-class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods.	1	5	2.15	1.034
26. TBLT makes classroom become noisy and students' lack of disciplines.	1	4	1.91	.843
27. I have difficulty in assessing my own performance.	1	4	2.88	.820
28. I have limited target language proficiency.	1	5	2.85	1.004
29. I cannot speak English much during the tasks because I don't know some words.	2	5	3.52	.755
30. I frequently use my L1 during the tasks.	2	5	3.19	.792

The data of follow-up questions were reported similar results with the survey. The students mostly expressed their challenges about language gaps during carrying out tasks and they had to use L1 (Khmer) to communicate with their peers. Not being certain about language use has led them to use L1 and L1 was easy for them to discuss ideas. Also, one student (S13) raised challenges with communication such as having different ideas, disagreements, or lack of enough time to negotiate ideas. Below are some examples of students' comments:

I did not have any challenges but sometimes during group discussions, I used L1 because it was easy for discussing and to understand about things that we were doing. And it also took less time for the discussion too. (S7)

The constraint that I faced during the implementation of TBLT was that I did not know some words and grammar. And I could not think of them sometimes. I did not have any problems with group work or pair work. I use L1 during group discussion because I did not know some words in English and it's easy to write. (S9)

Discussion

It is undeniable that sociocultural contexts where a language teaching method is adapted might present certain challenges for the implementation of that method (Pham and Renshaw 2015). For instance, in Cambodia students value the teacher as the authority who transfers knowledge to students (Howes & Ford, 2011), so the adaptation of TBLT might confront some sociocultural values in the context (Carless, 2012). Yet, such a scenario was not seen as the premier challenge in this study. What remains preoccupied is language proficiency (Carless, 2002; & Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011), which led to a difference between the students' expectations and realities. That is, some aspects of the students' perceptions toward TBLT for teaching writing were highly positive, only to decrease after the intervention. These aspects include the use of TBLT to promote target language use, integrated skills development, learning progress, and interaction skills. As mentioned, this decrease might be influenced by some challenges (e.g. linguistic gaps, or conflicts of ideas during group discussion) which the students faced during the practice of TBLT. For example, the students' language proficiency was limited, which led them to use L1 for communication during carrying out tasks.

Besides, what prompts the students to use L1 in the classroom might be due to the complexity of the tasks which students might not think of appropriate words to speak (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). Carless (2004) found similar results that during performing tasks mother tongue was mainly used by a group of young learners in China. In fact, using L1 in the L2 classroom is not new and has been debated widely in the literature (Nhem, 2019). Atkinson (1987) argues that the stereotype of promoting English only in the English class needs to be considered, whilst how L2 can be maximized should be the priority in the ELT classroom. Simply put, L1 can serve a vital role in facilitating the L2 learning process (Atkinson, 1987). In this regard, Nunan (1991) suggests that tasks should be a mix of closed and open tasks, especially for lower-levels learners. Besides the linguistic constraint, one student (S13) in this study raised concerns about the lack of enough time for discussion, which previous research (Bao & Du, 2015; Douglas & Kim, 2014; & Yen, 2016) has reported a similar result.

Other aspects (e.g. activating students' motivation, materials, & collaborative learning) have remained moderately positive after the intervention (also support studies by Lam & Law, 2007; & Tran, 2007 on motivation). Thereby, the use of TBLT to enhance students' motivation in learning writing has realized the aim of the study. In

addition, the results of students' comments in the open-ended questions indicated that they preferred learning with TBLT because they had more opportunities to practice English and develop communicative skills. Willis (1996) remarks that TBLT allows students to get exposure to the language, use the language, increase their motivation, and reduce teacher's instruction. The students also perceived that TBLT is the integration of reading, listening, speaking, and writing through collaborative learning, which could help improve their English better (Willis, 1996). These results support research by Douglas & Kim (2014) which reported that the participants favored TBLT because it promotes interactive activities to develop the four skills (reading, listening, speaking & writing).

The results of the study further revealed some differences of the students' attitudes toward learning writing before and after the intervention of TBLT in teaching writing. For example, students' attitudes toward enjoying writing in English, learning from a writing model, and discussing ideas with peers were found a small decline. Again, such issues might be due to linguistic challenges (e.g. grammar and vocabulary) of these learners. Other factors (e.g. writing as much as possible, having more ideas to write, being able to write better when working with peers, feedback from peers or the teacher, and being motivated to writing when working groups) tended to gain advantages (Robinson, 2011). These results advocate the study by Tran (2007) reporting that students expected teachers to have a range of teaching activities (e.g. pair/group work) for students to learn. The results of the follow-up questions also revealed that the students were motivated to learn writing because they had more ideas to write, learned the structure for writing, and received constructive feedback from peers and the teacher.

Limitations and Conclusion

Whilst this study has presented both merits and some challenges of TBLT, the study also carried some limitations. First, it was conducted over a small number of participants in one context, and thus the results cannot be generalized into other settings. Second, different genres (text types) were used to teach students with TBLT in this study. Further research should focus on using TBTL to teach students a specific genre and students' paragraph writings should be examined. Third, the intervention of TBLT was conducted for six sessions in one academic term only. Future studies should extend more sessions in two or three academic terms. Despite these limitations, the intervention of TBLT to teach writing is of success and students' motivation toward learning

writing is positive. It is recommended that tasks (e.g. speaking, reading or listening) used in TBLT should be aligned with the task for students to write because these will provide students with both ideas and linguistic knowledge to facilitate their writing process. Moreover, to enhance the use of L2 in the classroom, certain strategies or rules should be applied.

Acknowledgements

References

Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: A neglected resource? *ELT Journal*, 241-247.

Bao, R., & Du, X. (2015). Implementation of task-based language teaching in Chinese as a foreign language: benefits and challenges. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 28*(3), 291-310.

Carless, D. (2002). Implementing task-based learning with young learners. *ELT Journal, 56*(4), 389-396.

Carless, D. (2004). Issues in teachers' reinterpretation of a task-based Innovation in primary schools. *TESOL Quarterly*, 639-662.

Carless, D. (2007). The suitability of task-based approaches for secondary schools: Perspective from Hong Kong. *System, 35*(4), 595-608.

Carless, D. (2012). TBLT in EFL settings: Looking back and moving forward. In A. Shehadeh, & C. A. Coombe, *Task-based language teaching in foreign language contexts* (pp. 345-358). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Carless, D. R. (2003). Factors in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. *System*, 485–500.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *Modern Language Journal, 78*(3), 273-284.

Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research, 2*(3), 203–229.

Dörnyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication strategies in a second language: Definitions and taxonomies. *Language Learning, 47*(1), 173-210.

Douglas, S. R., & Kim, M. (2014). Task-based language teaching and English for academic purposes: An Investigation into instructor perceptions and practice in the Canadian context. *TESL Canada Journal, 33*(8), 1-22.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching.* Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2006). The methodology of task-based teaching. *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3), 19-45.

Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: Sorting out the misunderstanding. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 19*(3), 121-146.

Ellis, R. (2011). Macro-and micro-evaluations of task-based teaching. In *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 212-235). Cambridge University Press.

Guariento, W., & Morley, J. (2001). Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom. *ELT Journal, 55*(4), 347-353.

Hawkes, M. (2015). Using pre-task models to promote mining in task-based language teaching. *TESOL International Journal, 10*(2).

Hismanoglu, M., & Hismanoglu, S. (2011). Task-based language teaching: What every EFL teacher should do. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46–52.

Howes, D., & Ford, D. (2011). Negotiating globalization: The Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In S. Marginson, S. Kaur, & E. Sawir, *Higher education in the Asia-Pacific: Strategic responses to globalization* (pp. 161–177). Springer Netherlands.

Huang, J. (2010). Grammar instruction for adult English language learners: A task-based learning framework. *Journal of Adult Education, 39*(1), 29-37.

Jong, I.-J. (2006). EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching: With a focus on Korean secondary classroom practice. *Asian EFL Journal, 8*(3), 192-206.

Lam, S. F., & Law, Y. K. (2007). The roles of instructional practices and motivation in writing performance. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 145-164.

Long, M. H. (2000). Focus on form in task-based language teaching. In L. D. Richard, & S. G. Elana, *Language policy and pedagogy: Essays in honor of A. Ronald Walton.* John Benjamins.

Nhem, D. (2019). Cambodian EFL teachers' and learners' beliefs about communicative language teaching. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 6(2)*, 238-251.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative tasks and the language curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(2), 279-295.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pham, T. H., & Renshaw, P. (2015). Adapting evidence-based pedagogy to local cultural contexts: A design research study of policy borrowing in Vietnam. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 256–274.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richards, J. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today.* Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, P. (2011). Task-based language learning: A review of issues. *Language Learning*, 1–36.

Tran, L. T. (2007). Learners' motivation and identity in the Vietnamese EFL writing classroom. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 6*(1), 151-163.

Willis, J. (1996). *Longman handbooks for language teachers: A framework for task-based learning.* Edinburge Gate: Longman.

Willis, J., & Willis, D. (2013). *Doing task-based teaching-Oxford handbooks for language teachers.* Oxford University Press.

Yen, P. H. (2016). Challenges of shifting to task-based language teaching: A story from a Vietnamese teacher. *Can Tho University Journal of Science*, 37-45.

Zhu-Xiu, T. (2016). Task-based language teaching in Chinese EFL context: Learners' attitudes and perceptions. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research, 4*(4), 21-33.