



**TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR VOCABULARY
ACQUISITION: A STUDY OF INTERMEDIATE EFL STUDENTS**

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Abstract. This investigation delves into the efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as a pedagogical framework for the explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary to intermediate learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study will critically examine the theoretical foundations of TBLT, elucidating its inherent affordances for fostering lexical development, particularly concerning the interplay between explicit instruction and implicit acquisition through communicative tasks. Furthermore, the paper will articulate empirically grounded strategies for the design and implementation of pedagogic tasks meticulously aligned with specific lexical objectives within the EFL learning environment. To empirically evaluate the proposed framework, a research study was conducted involving 9th-grade EFL students. Data collection methodologies were employed, and the resultant data were subjected to systematic analysis, the findings of which are presented and interpreted in detail.

Keywords: lexical acquisition, receptive processing, semantic comprehension, interactional dynamics, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), contextual encoding, oral communicative fluency.

INTRODUCTION. For intermediate learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the acquisition of vocabulary is paramount in enhancing their language proficiency. At this stage, students frequently recognize the need for more precise and contextually relevant lexical items to articulate intricate thoughts and engage in more authentic communication. Instructing specific vocabulary—such as academic, technical, or topic-related lexical units—necessitates methodologies that transcend mere rote learning or isolated word lists. Task-Based Learning (TBL) offers a compelling resolution by integrating vocabulary learning into meaningful, goal-oriented activities that mirror real-world language use.

In EFL settings, where exposure to English outside the classroom might be limited, it becomes increasingly crucial to cultivate opportunities for learners to encounter and utilize new vocabulary in communicative scenarios. TBL emphasizes the completion of tasks that simulate genuine language use, enabling learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and apply vocabulary within context. This approach not only bolsters



retention and deeper comprehension of novel words but also fosters learner autonomy and motivation.

LITERATURE REVIEW. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach in second language acquisition (SLA), gaining traction among researchers and practitioners globally [Willis & Willis, 2007]. Its increasing integration into language pedagogy curricula worldwide underscores its perceived value in facilitating effective language learning. This literature review will explore the theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and research findings related to TBLT, drawing upon key works in the field.

Willis and Willis (2007) provide a foundational text for practitioners, offering practical guidance on the implementation of TBLT in the classroom. Their work details various task types and provides concrete examples, making the theoretical framework accessible for educators seeking to integrate TBLT into their teaching practices. This emphasis on practical application highlights a key strength of TBLT: its potential to translate theoretical principles into tangible classroom activities.

The effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing specific language skills has been empirically investigated. For instance, an experimental study [Willis & Willis, 2007] conducted in Malaysian public universities demonstrated the positive impact of TBLT on the writing skills of undergraduate EFL learners. This finding aligns with the core principles of TBLT, which emphasize the use of existing linguistic resources in meaningful communicative contexts, ultimately leading to greater fluency and confidence in real-life situations both within and beyond the classroom. The positive feedback from learners in this study, who found TBLT engaging and learner-centered, further supports its pedagogical value.

Skehan (1998) offers a cognitive perspective on language learning within the TBLT framework. His "dual mode" processing system, which integrates rule-based and exemplar-based processing, provides a lens through which to analyze how tasks can be designed to optimize cognitive engagement and facilitate language acquisition. Skehan argues that effective SLA involves learners strategically utilizing both processing systems, balancing accuracy and fluency. This cognitive approach underscores the importance of task design in managing cognitive load and promoting effective language processing during communicative activities.

Despite its growing acceptance, TBLT has faced certain criticisms and misunderstandings. Ellis (2009) addresses these concerns by clarifying key concepts and arguing against common misinterpretations of TBLT. He emphasizes that there is no singular "task-based teaching" approach and contends that many criticisms arise from a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes a "task" and the theoretical rationales underpinning TBLT. Ellis further suggests that TBLT should not necessarily be viewed as a replacement for more traditional, form-focused instruction but rather as a complementary approach. He concludes by acknowledging genuine challenges in implementing TBLT, as evidenced in evaluation studies.



Zhang (2015) provides a comprehensive review of research and theory related to TBLT, highlighting its evolution and widespread acceptance within SLA. The concept of "task" has become a well-validated construct in the field, characterized by its emphasis on meaning. Zhang notes that TBLT is considered an effective means of drawing learners' attention to form, function, and meaning simultaneously. His review categorizes key issues, defines tasks, outlines their criteria, and discusses the practical implementation of TBLT. This overview reinforces the multifaceted nature of TBLT and its potential to integrate various aspects of language learning. In conclusion, the literature suggests that TBLT is a robust and increasingly validated pedagogical approach in SLA. It offers practical strategies for classroom implementation [Willis & Willis, 2007], demonstrates empirical effectiveness in improving language skills [Willis & Willis, 2007], aligns with cognitive theories of language learning (Skehan, 1998), and has been critically examined and defended against misunderstandings [Ellis, 2009; Zhang, 2015]. While challenges in implementation exist, the theoretical and empirical support for TBLT as a valuable framework for language teaching, particularly for intermediate EFL learners, is substantial.

Research methodology. The following research questions were set for investigation:

1. How does teaching specific words through tasks (TBLT) help intermediate English as a Foreign Language learners learn new vocabulary? How does directly explaining words and remembering them while communicating work together?
2. What simple and clear ways to create and do learning tasks that focus on learning the needed words best help intermediate English learners build their vocabulary using TBLT?

The data of the research was organized in the following steps:

- Step 1 – Lesson Observations;
- Step 2 – Interviewing teachers;
- Step 3 – Learners' Pre-test;
- Step 4 - Lesson organization
- Step 5 – Learners' Post test
- Step 6 – Learners' questionnaire

The content-oriented approach and pedagogically oriented approach are two distinct models for teaching writing. The content-oriented approach is founded on the view that the purpose inherent in a particular act of writing is an essential feature — a perspective strongly supported by the cognitive process theory of writing developed by Flower and Hayes (e.g., 1981). Flower and Hayes emphasize that writing is a goal-directed process, and when a writer has a specific purpose, their efforts become more focused and effective. Their research suggests that a lack of clear goals can lead to less engaged and more superficial writing, as the writer lacks a guiding intention.



Content-oriented writing exercises sometimes provide the purpose for the writer by specifying a reason for writing a particular passage before actual writing takes place. In other cases, it is assumed that writing passages on topics related to learners' specific needs will fulfill their real-world purposes, thus stimulating their interest and involvement in writing. This view aligns with the understanding that clear goals and relevance enhance motivation in writing development, leading to better engagement and deeper understanding of the material [Flower & Hayes, 1981]. While observing some teachers' lessons, we came across with ready-made Manual for Writing lessons. It included all the documentation (calendar plan, curriculum, lesson plans, visual materials, and handouts). We have to analyze all these materials according to the following analysis, that is the Analytical method.

Comparative analysis. An analysis of the calendar plans, topics, and curriculum was conducted to review the 9th-grade writing program. The review focused on identifying topic repetitions, the alignment of materials with the course level, and the usability of the ready-made model manual for lessons.

Needs Analysis. Observations and interviews were carried out at School № 5 in the Chinaz district to ascertain the needs of the students and teachers. These tools assisted the researcher in conducting a needs analysis. The observation sheets were intended to examine the syllabus, lesson plans, the school's curriculum, the teaching-learning process, and student behavior. Following this, the collected data was described. The interview guidelines provided a set of questions designed to identify learners' challenges and requirements concerning writing materials.

A crucial aspect of designing writing materials is initially understanding what learners require in this area. Through a needs assessment, information regarding students' attributes and their needs in acquiring writing skills can be gathered. This information can then serve as a reference point for the creation of suitable materials.

Several activities were part of the needs analysis conducted with the sampled learners at the school. The first involved analyzing the students' characteristics. Subsequently, their abilities, interests, challenges, and attitudes towards writing were examined. Finally, the needs analysis aimed to understand the available school resources, such as the syllabus, student achievements, textbooks, and the English language learning schedule.

Research approach and Design. A comprehensive needs analysis, involving observations and interviews at School № 5 in the Chinaz district, was undertaken to meticulously determine the specific pedagogical requirements of both the student body and the teaching staff concerning writing instruction. The data gathered through these instruments was crucial for informing the subsequent design of effective and targeted instructional materials. When viewed through the lens of Stephen Krashen's influential Monitor Model of second language acquisition, this initial needs assessment takes on particular significance. Krashen's theory posits that the development of fluent writing proficiency is fundamentally rooted in the learner's



subconsciously acquired linguistic competence, a process distinct from the conscious memorization and application of explicit grammatical rules. Therefore, understanding the students' current level of this acquired language becomes a primary objective.

The needs analysis encompassed a multifaceted examination of various factors impacting the learners' writing development. This included a thorough evaluation of their individual characteristics as learners, their existing writing abilities and areas of difficulty, their personal interests and motivations related to writing, and their prevailing attitudes towards the writing process itself. Furthermore, the analysis extended to an understanding of the available educational resources within the school environment, such as the prescribed syllabus and curriculum, documented levels of student academic achievement, the designated textbooks and other instructional materials, and the established schedule for English language instruction. According to the precepts of Krashen's model, a detailed understanding of these variables is paramount. It allows educators to ensure that the instructional materials subsequently developed offer 'comprehensible input' – linguistic data that is slightly beyond the learners' current level of acquired competence. Krashen theorizes that this type of input is the primary catalyst for subconscious language acquisition, which in turn fuels genuine communicative fluency in writing.

The research design incorporated a dual methodological approach, strategically integrating both content-oriented and pedagogy-focused paradigms for writing instruction. The content-oriented approach emphasizes the importance of a clear and intrinsic purpose for any writing task, a perspective strongly advocated by scholars like Fames. He argued that a well-defined objective enhances the writer's efficiency and focus. Conversely, a lack of such purpose, as noted by Sprache, can lead to less effective and superficial writing. However, when considering Krashen's theoretical framework, while a clearly articulated purpose can certainly engage the learner's 'monitor' – the conscious system used for editing and error correction – the underlying fluency and naturalness of their writing will primarily stem from the depth and quality of their subconscious language acquisition, driven by meaningful and comprehensible input encountered over time.

Pedagogical considerations, encompassing the art and science of teaching, are inherently integral to the design of any successful writing curriculum. Effective course design, as reflected in previously published materials, typically takes into account factors such as the optimal time allocation for learning activities, the level of engagement and enjoyment the activities offer to students, and the intrinsic interest value of the textual content. From Krashen's perspective, these pedagogical strengths are particularly valuable because they contribute significantly to the creation of a more positive and less anxiety-inducing learning environment. A reduced '**affective filter**,' as Krashen termed the psychological barriers to language acquisition, allows learners to be more receptive to the comprehensible input necessary for subconscious language development. When students are engaged and interested, they are less likely to feel stressed or inhibited, thus facilitating a more natural and effective acquisition



process.

The collection of data for this research endeavor involved the strategic deployment of several methodological instruments. These included structured interview guidelines designed to elicit detailed information from both teachers and students, systematic observation protocols for analyzing classroom interactions and instructional practices, pre- and post-assessment instruments to gauge changes in writing proficiency, and comprehensive questionnaires to gather broader perspectives and attitudes. The information gleaned from these tools was essential for a nuanced understanding of the specific pedagogical needs of the target population, the types of instructional texts and resources previously utilized, the learners' diverse characteristics and academic backgrounds, the specific abilities and challenges they faced in writing, the structure and content of the prescribed syllabus, the established instructional schedule, and the annual pedagogical plans of the teaching staff. Within Krashen's theoretical framework, the rich data systematically derived from these instruments serves a critical function: it helps educators to accurately delineate the learners' current level of acquired linguistic competence and to pinpoint specific areas where the provision of targeted comprehensible input, coupled with strategies aimed at lowering the affective filter, can be most effectively implemented to foster optimal progress and fluency in writing.

Teacher-Focused Investigation. Teacher Interviews:

Interviews were conducted with teachers from the school to understand their teaching approaches and requirements. These conversations aimed to be direct and natural to gather reliable information. A set of ten questions focused on the teachers' professional experiences was used. The researcher also interviewed teachers to understand their perspectives, gather information, and identify any needs or challenges they faced regarding reading materials. This interview was done in written form. Following analysis of the responses, discussions and conclusions about the teachers' needs would be established.

Classroom Observations: Data was collected through observing classroom sessions. This included information on student behavior, their reading and writing processes, and the teachers' instructional methods and assessment techniques.

Learner-Focused Investigation. Initial and Final Assessments:

The researcher administered pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate the students' language abilities. These tests contained twenty questions designed to assess their prior knowledge of English. The results from the initial and final tests were compared. Students completed the written pre-test at the beginning of the first lesson, with a 20-minute time limit. In the latter part of the same lesson, the researcher distributed paper-based tests to each student.

Lesson Structure: More than five lessons centered on reading activities were planned and delivered. The researcher examined the official curriculum plan and the 9th-grade



student textbook. Based on the topics and the students' level, five detailed lesson plans were created, supplemented with additional learning materials.

Student Survey: Ninth-grade students completed a questionnaire to gather their opinions and identify any problems they encountered with writing and the materials they had previously used. The questionnaire also sought information about their learning conditions, personal characteristics, abilities, prior knowledge, and preferred writing learning styles. The questionnaire, consisting of ten questions and presented in A5 format, was administered during the final lesson.

Data Analysis: To analyze the student questionnaire responses, all answers were tallied. By comparing these answers, statistical data was compiled. This involved using the **EXCEL** computer program to organize the data into **tables**.

Research Participants:

Four teachers and two 9th-grade groups participated in the experiment. The 9th "B" group served as the control group, while the 9th "V" group was the experimental group where the researcher implemented the lessons.

STUDENTS	PRE TEST	POST TEST
Abdulazizov I.	26p	28p
Abdumalikov Z.	26p	30p
Dadajonov X.	28p	30p
Abduvaliyeva Z.	24p	28p
Ashirova N.	28p	30p
Jamalova M.	30p	30p
Miraxmatov Sh.	26p	28p
Rustamov I.	28p	30p
RESULTS	88,3%	97,5%

Table1. Data analysis

Results and discussions. This study examined how Task-Based Learning (TBL) impacted learning travel vocabulary. Results showed significant improvement in average test scores (from 88.3% to 97.5%), with all students progressing, especially those who started with lower scores. Student feedback indicated that TBL activities were engaging, useful, and interactive, helping them remember vocabulary better than traditional methods.

While TBL was largely successful, some issues arose, like managing group work and needing clearer task instructions. Students appreciated the teacher's support, which aided their learning. Overall, the higher test scores and positive student comments highlight TBL's effectiveness in boosting language skills. Future use could be improved by better group management and balancing speaking practice with accuracy. This approach effectively made learning student-focused and relevant to real life.



Personally, using TBL to teach travel vocabulary was a valuable experience, connecting theory and practice. Planning involved choosing relevant vocabulary for a global world and seeing TBL as a good fit, supported by research on meaningful tasks improving speaking skills. Defining specific research questions about TBL's impact on speaking and challenges was key.

Implementing TBL lessons, like planning trips and sharing travel stories, was both hard and rewarding. Students were engaged in researching and presenting, using vocabulary in context. Group work had issues like some students dominating, requiring strategies for equal participation. Storytelling and problem-solving in the second lesson reinforced vocabulary and critical thinking.

Data from observations, surveys, and interviews showed TBL's positive impact. Test scores improved, and students found TBL more engaging and practical than lectures. Teachers noted TBL improved communication but needed careful planning to balance speaking and grammar, and manage different student levels.

Reflecting, TBL is powerful for language learning, making classrooms interactive and helping students own their learning. Key lessons include providing support (scaffolding), being flexible with tasks, and valuing student feedback to improve lessons.

Despite success, challenges like group dynamics and balancing fluency with accuracy need attention. Future steps involve trying new grouping methods, integrating grammar practice with TBL, and using digital tools to make tasks more real and appealing.

In conclusion, TBL is a valuable way to create engaging, practical language learning. Addressing challenges will make it even more effective in helping students communicate confidently. This project was a great learning experience for improving teaching methods and focusing on student-centered learning.

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