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The Impact of TBLT in Developing EFL Students' Writing Performance Case study: Third-year Students in the Department of English at Tebessa University

تأثير تعليم اللغة القائم على المهمة في تطوير أداء الكتابة لدى متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

دراسة حالة: طلبة السنة الثالثة ليسانس قسم اللغة الانجليزية جامعة تبسة

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Abstract

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Learning writing skills is a challenging task for foreign language learners. This challenge stems from the fact that students require various skills and knowledge while writing. They need, for instance, enough vocabulary, grammar knowledge, cohesion devices, and coherent paragraphs. Students also require background knowledge about the subject matter of the writing task. Therefore, they create their ideas accordingly. To fulfill these goals and meet the challenges, an approach that meets the written task requirement and improves the students' abilities is necessary. This study investigates the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach in developing Algerian third-year EFL students' writing performance at Tebessa University. The focus is on finding out the effect and feasibility of using the TBLT approach in English language teaching classrooms. The data were collected experimentally through pre-test and post-test after the experimental group received TBLT treatment for six weeks. A sample comprised two groups (an experimental group and a control group), i.e., the entire population (64 students) in our case took part in the study. After analysing the pre-test and the post-test results, the findings revealed that TBLT has successfully developed EFL learners' writing performance in terms of its aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and cohesion.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

تعليم مهارة الكتابة مهمة صعبة لمتعلمي اللغة الأجنبية. وتنبع الصعوبة من حقيقة أن الطلاب يحتاجون إلى مهارات ومعارف متنوعة أثناء الكتابة. فمثلا يحتاجون إلى قدر كافٍ من المفردات والمعارف النحوية، وكذلك القدرة على استخدام أدوات الاتساق والانسجام، كما يجب ان يكون هناك اتساق وانسجام بين الفقرات. يحتاج الطلاب أيضا إلى الإلمام بخلفية الموضوع محل الكتابة فابتكار افكارهم ينطلق منها، ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف ومواجهة التحديات، من الضروري اتباع نهج يلبي متطلبات الموضوع الذي كلفوا بمهمة الكتابة حوله ويحسن قدراتهم. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في استخدام نهج التعليم القائم على المهمة في تطوير أداء الطلاب الجزائريين للسنة الثالثة لغة إنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة تبسة. ينصب محور الدراسة على معرفة تأثير وفاعلية هذا النهج في اقسام تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. تم جمع البيانات عن طريق تجربة اجري خلالها اختبار قبلي واخر بعدي بعد أن تلقى طلاب المجموعة التجريبية الدروس بواسطة نهج التعليم القائم على المهمة لمدة ستة أسابيع. تضمنت العينة مجموعتين (مجموعة تجريبية ومجموعة مرجعية (شاهدة)). وقد شارك جميع الطلاب (64 طالبًا) في هذه الدراسة. وبعد تحليل نتائج الاختبار القبلي والبعدي كشفت النتائج أن نهج التعليم القائم على المهمة قد نجح في تطوير أداء الكتابة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من ناحية الرصيد اللغوي، قواعد اللغة، اتساق وانسجام الفقرات.

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the four fundamental language skills alongside listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing skills are essential for every university student, teacher, and researcher. Wolff (2000) believes that "Writing is not only a means of communicating but also a tool of learning a language" (p.111). From this interpretation, we can recognise that a good command of writing skills is crucial to improving language learning. Nevertheless, learning the writing skill is challenging for second or foreign language learners, (Al Fadda, 2012) & (Mourtaga, 2004). This difficulty stems from the multiple skills and knowledge that students are required to employ while writing. They need, for example, a good vocabulary repertoire, grammar knowledge, coherence, and cohesion. In the Algerian EFL context, writing is a challenging process for many students. At University, students of foreign languages, especially English, use writing to reach academic achievements. They write paragraphs, essays, and even do research projects, and in doing so, they go through steps to reach the final production. For this reason, students have to develop their writing to reach their goals. This development includes producing a piece of writing that is coherent, cohesive, and meaningful.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a subcategory of communicative language teaching, comes to remedy this dilemma as it models real-life situations where writing is interactively used. Accordingly, the TBLT approach focuses on the actual tasks that stimulate students' interest since learning would be built around that particular task (Nunan, 2005). According to Willis (1996), who provided a framework of this type of approach, the teacher's role limits guiding students during the activity by selecting and sequencing the tasks, preparing learners for the tasks, and raising students' awareness. In this process, the teacher's role is to adopt real-life tasks and problems as teaching materials to stimulate students to use cognitive thinking methods (Hung, 2014).

Therefore, it seems that using a task-based language teaching approach may positively enhance students' writing skills and help them become better writers.

2. Statement of the problem

To meet Third-year EFL students' needs in developing their English writing skills in the Department of English at Tebessa University; we have to adopt a prominent teaching approach that meets the requirement of the written task and enhances the students' abilities. For this reason, we proposed and researched a learning approach namely the Task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach. Furthermore, In Tebessa University, as a written expression teacher, I have noticed that third-year EFL students have low proficiency in written production. We have also noticed that students cannot produce a well-organised piece of writing free of errors. Besides, their writings are incoherent and have poor language as they encounter vocabulary shortages. Our EFL students have fewer opportunities to write inside the classrooms since they are familiar with producing writing pieces only in their exams and quizzes. Also, they have low motivation to write inside the classroom. For that, they need to develop their linguistic abilities.

Students in the English department reported that their weaknesses in writing are because of inappropriate teaching methods such as the natural approach. Where teachers are the dominants in the classes and rely on the teacher-centred approach, in which they do not interact and discuss with their students in class. Therefore, the need to support students in their English learning process and make teachers feel interested in developing pedagogical language instructions, which provide better language learning opportunities has become increasingly significant. After considering the problems and reviewing the related literature to develop third-year EFL students' written production, the findings report that a task-based approach is an appropriate approach in developing written production among those students at Tebessa University. Therefore, we believe that TBLT may positively enhance students' writings and become better writers.

3. Writing in EFL Teaching

Ghaith (2003) defines writing as a complex process that allows writers to discover thoughts and ideas; it also encourages thinking and learning as it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection.

It has been explored that our EFL learners face severe difficulties in turning out their symbolic mental pictures of their ideas to produce a correct piece of writing that respects the grammar rules, spelling, punctuation, and coherence. Indeed, writing in a foreign language reflects the learners' command of the target language system by mastering grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Consequently, writing is considered an integrated skill, because it requires students to consider sub-skills such as:

-cohesion: The manner in which the sentences are linked,

-Coherence: the unity of the topic,

-Relevance: the learners' ability to use suitable words in suitable contexts,

-Punctuation and grammar, and

-Communicative competence: the ability to exchange ideas and thoughts in a native form style. In order to be considered as communicative, fluent, and cohesive. Because a piece of writing must have a situation which involves a writer, an audience, and a purpose.

3.1 Elements of writing skills

The writer intends to adopt a style that fits the goal of his situation. For example, in writing a letter, the writer would use different letters; a letter of complaint differs from a condolence letter in terms of the style. A complaint letter would require a business style taken seriously, while a letter of condolence would be more effective by using a conversational tone.

Students learn these differences in writing at intermediate levels. However, students have already mastered these basics at advanced levels and should learn more professional writing styles. Writing should be precise and concise and ensure that the ideas and thoughts are comprehensible to fulfil a suitable academic style. Strong (2001) claims that to do that successfully. Writers should make sure that the text meets the following four points

3.1.1 Sentence form

It is necessary to avoid everyday language and informal words. The written products are final, and the writer has to get the reader to infer the expected meaning.

The sentence's density and its units are essential elements in a sentence, and the writer has to be careful with them.

A periodic sentence takes the significant point in the middle or at the end of the sentence. Here, the focal point is changed by subordinate clauses before and after their position in the sentence. Here, the reader must reach the sentence end in order to understand the meaning. The skillful writer frequently uses this type of sentence, which seems difficult to master. Depending on either one of the orders the writer chooses, phrases and clauses are arranged to highlight what is more important to express and focus the attention on the main idea.

Williams (2007) claims that the grammar rules allow the writer to arrange words in different ways. However, the stylistic choices may be influenced by the discourse type and the general culture. That is to say, what a writer seeks to emphasize that stylistics is a culture-bound practice. In contrast, modern writing has supported loose sentences in most modes of written discourse. Writing focused more on the periodic sentence, and in the Enlightenment Age, the writers supported the balanced sentence (William, 2001). In technical writing, too, using different styles to express the same idea may lead the reader to understand that the use of various text writing and organization types was intended to modify or carry additional meaning.

3.1.2 Word choice

Students at an advanced level of language learning learn to visualise themselves in the setting. Teachers ask students to write and think in words that convey vital elements of that setting. Excellent choice of words: concrete nouns, active verbs, specific adjectives allow the reader to visualise the sentence quickly.

The choice of words produces a voice of writing, which is considered an element of style that shows the writer's personality. The writer's voice can be serious or funny, authoritative or reflective, objective or passionate, impersonal or talkative, and so on. The writers have to select the exact word to convey meaning. They use adjectives carefully and adverbs rarely, letting their nouns and verbs be the major

grammatical categories do the work.

In oral language, Anderson & Lynch (1988) claim that diction, which is the distinctive choices of vocabulary and the writer's expression style, can influence the writer's style. For instance, argumentative and expository writings use a register (a specific range of words in a language related to a particular issue) in which the subject is discussed. However, descriptive and narrative writings are more flexible and tolerant of the wide variety of words.

According to Strong (2001), academic writing styles are also achieved through words that contribute to the sentence flow. Indeed, alliteration, polysyllabic words, and consonance can generate complex sentences in reading and break up the sentence rhythm.

3.1.3 Coherence Vs cohesion

In the process of text analysis, linguists are concerned with distinguishing between the terms 'cohesion' and 'coherence.' Overall, texts make absolute sense as intended by their writers because of the agreement and connection between the two terms. Many linguists and particularly sociolinguists have approached the theme of sentence and text meaning in language. Halliday (1994) makes a difference between coherence and cohesion in terms of internal and external relations of a clause. According to him, coherence is "the internal [resource] for structuring the clause as a message," including the notions of 'theme' and 'information.' At the same time, cohesion mainly related to the external relationship between clauses and clause complexes, which are independent of grammatical structure. (p.308-309)

Other researchers like De Beaugrande (1992) claim that cohesion is the grammatical and lexical relation within a text or sentence that carries a text together and gives its meaning. Hence, one can distinguish between two types of linguistic relations: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Thus, grammatical cohesion is based on the structural content, and lexical cohesion is based on background knowledge.

3.1.4 Sentence fluency

Danes (1970) claimed that sentence fluency is the smooth flow of clauses and phrases that leads to coherence. A variety of sentences with distinctive

lengths and rhythms fulfil different effects and produce different styles. For example, parallel structures among sentences and paragraphs are used to express parallel ideas. This structure is considered an effortless task for expert writers. For EFL students, teachers of writing try to teach learners how to avoid monotony by producing various sentence structures depending on their topic. Literary styles are achieved when students choose their words carefully, avoid vagueness, delete redundancies, and use subordinate clauses and phrases for easy reading.

3.1.5 Sentence combining

Sentence fluency is one of the few effective methods that help students to achieve coherent paragraphs and essays. To practise sentence-combining activities, students maximise brief sentences into fluid passages by using linkers and connectors. These activities will help learners to develop their writing skills and improve their styles. Sentence combining allows students to move from short, simple sentences towards longer and complex sentences. Strong (2001) claims that writing skills advocates using sentence-combining activities to learn the stylistic choices that professional writers make.

4. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Approach

Richards and Theodore (2001) claim that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Task-Based Learning (TBL) is where the students learn language through some tasks. It is a teaching method that includes tasks as central components in teaching. Frost (2007) claims that TBLT focuses on students doing meaningful tasks using the target language, and assessment is primarily based on task outcomes rather than the accuracy of language form. Corbett and Kearns (2003) stress that the educational system gradually shifts a significant focus on learning rather than teaching. The term "task" is an essential concept in TBLT methodology. People usually do hundreds of tasks in everyday life, such as making a phone call, doing a specific job, booking a flight ticket, buying a T-shirt, writing a letter, and so on.

In Task-based Learning, there are many tasks that experts had used. Prabhu (1987) divided the task into

information gap task, reasoning gap task, and opinion gap task. Willis (1996) divided tasks into; listing, ordering, sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. Finally, Nunan (2004) offers two task types; real-world and pedagogical tasks.

In Task-Based Learning, there are three frameworks Willis (1996). It involves the pre-task stage, task cycle stage, and language focus stage. Pre-task involves the topic introduction and task introduction. The topic introduction includes brainstorming, and the task introduction includes a demonstration of the task. The Task-cycle phase consists of tasks, planning activity, reporting, or presenting. In doing the task, students are given a task in pairs or groups. In the planning activity, students plan and rehearse the task report within a group. In reporting activity, students perform the task report. The last stage is language focus which is divided into language analysis and practice. The language analysis aims to get students to identify the language features. In language analysis, the teacher can set some language-focused tasks to identify some language features, such as finding words or phrases related to the topic or finding the verb in simple past form. Then, in language practice, the students practice the language features identified either in oral or written language practices.

The TBLT teacher has different roles: an organiser of discussion, manager of pair/ group work, facilitator, guide, motivator, and language teacher. Similarly, TBL learners have several roles: the writer/ reporter for a pair or group, leader/chairperson to ensure everyone in the group talks, and observer.

4.1 Research on Task-Based Language Teaching and Writing Skills

Searching in the review of related literature especially practical studies, we find number of researchers (Pragasam (2018) ; González& Pinzón (2019); Bantis (2008)) have proved that task-based language teaching positively affects language development and learners' attitude towards language learning. Several studies attempted to find out the effect of using the TBLT approach on students' writing performance. In an action research, Pragasam (2018) investigates whether

Task-based learning (TBL) can improve narrative writing composition among form four students. The findings revealed that students performed well in Task-based learning Lessons compared to other lessons. Students perceived Task-based learning as an approach that could help them in narrative writing and reflected positive responses. The findings of the study revealed that Task-based learning improved students' performance in narrative writing.

González& Pinzón (2019) designed action research to determine Task-Based Language Teaching's effect on public school learners' writing skills. The findings of this study revealed that the use of TBLT improved the students' writing skills. Students achieved better-written production results; they increased their vocabulary, reduced the number of grammar errors, and improved their syntax. In a study conducted by Bantis (2008), he investigated TBLT use in teaching writing. Bantis' research focused on finding out the problems connected with using TBL pedagogically to teach English communicatively and the influence of such instructions on a student with mixed ability.

Moreover, the focus was on finding the effect of using the TBLT approach on L2 acquisition of writing. The researcher used a mixed-method design that employed qualitative data collection and quantitative data analysis. The data were collected in 35 students' written transcriptions of writing conferences, writing samples, and interviews.

The findings revealed that TBL improved the students' writing acquisition. The results also showed that TBL proved to be a valuable second language acquisition vehicle to address second language learners' diverse needs.

Another study was conducted by Alavi and Tabar (2012), who examined task type and pre-task planning, as one aspect of TBL, on writing accuracy among Iranian EFL students. The participants were selected in a random sampling technique and then assigned to three experimental groups and one control group. The findings showed that the task type affects learners' writing accuracy so that greater accuracy is realised in

the more complex decision-making tasks. Moreover, the pre-task planning conditions significantly affected the students' accuracy; the experimental groups enjoyed a higher accuracy in the tasks than the control group, which confirmed the pre-task effect. In another study by Cao (2012), the researcher aimed to determine whether using the TBL approach in Chinese university students' context is feasible to train students on writing. She used two questionnaires and two tests (pre and post). The students' scores in the post-tests showed that TBL effectively promoted students' competencies in writing, as the students' scores in the Posttest were significantly different from their scores in the pre-test. The students in the experimental group also performed significantly better than the students in the control group. In another study, Han (2014) investigated using the TBL approach to university students' writing performance in China. Two treatment groups were created, the control and experimental group. The findings revealed that the experimental group students performed better than their peers in the control group. The results of this study indicate that TBL approach was helpful for learning writing.

Zhaochun (2015) applied Willis' (2003) approach of TBL to determine whether this approach can improve Chinese students' English writing and whether it is more effective than conventional teaching approaches. Fifty Chinese university students were recruited as a sample in the study. He assumed the students' mean scores in the language proficiency level after administering a language placement test. The subjects were then assigned to two intact class groups, experimental and control. Three instruments were used in the study: pre-test, Posttest, and interview. The two groups were asked to answer two writing tests: the pre-experiment test and the post-experiment test. The statistical analysis showed that the use of the TBLT approach, which lasted for 16 weeks, was effective, as the students in the experimental group who received training using this approach improved significantly in their English writing compared to the students who received conventional teaching.

5. Methodology Design

5.1 Research Design

Since this research's primary purpose was to determine the effect of using the TBLT approach on developing the third-year EFL students' writing skills, an experimental design was employed. According to Creswell (2011), this design enables us to find the differences in students' performance in the control and experimental group. In this research, the design helped us to determine each approach's effect on the students' writing performance in the control group (those who used the traditional approach) and the students' writing performance in the experimental group (those who used the TBLT approach). This design was achieved by finding the differences in each group's scores in the Posttest. That is to say, comparing the students' writing mean scores in the experimental with the control group students' mean scores.

The students in this research were categorised into two groups; control and experimental. All two groups were asked to write an essay before receiving any treatment as a pre-test. This pre-test was significant as a point of reference of the students' current writing performance in the two groups before receiving any treatment. The participants in the control group received the conventional method. The students in the experimental group, on the other hand, received writing treatment using Willis's (1996) TBLT approach, which consists of a pre-task, during the task (task cycle), and post-task (language focus). At the end of the treatment period, which lasted six weeks, the participants of both groups were asked to write an essay as a post-test. The data collected from the pre-tests and post-tests were calculated to answer the research question. Therefore, to answer the research question that targets the effect of the TBLT approach on the students' writing performance, the student's scores in the pre-test and Post-test of each group were compared.

The study was designed to conduct a pre-test at the onset of the research in the experimental group in

October 2018, followed by the class's TBLT treatment. The topics of the lessons "the types of essays," and our primary focus was on developing students' writing skills. The post-test was conducted at the end of the treatment of TBLT to the experimental group participants. Similarly, the post-test was administered to the control group participants without any treatment of TBLT. Students' writing skills during the pre-test and post-test of the experimental and control groups were collected to determine any development by introducing TBLT treatment. EFL students were given an essay to write about "education is the most powerful weapon in which you can change the world" for the pre-test, and "Define one of the following terms: hope, respect, happiness, marriage, family" for the post-test.

5.2 Population

Third-year EFL students were selected as the population of this study since they are familiar with the written expression module, and they have been exposed to this module for the third time. Since we have only two groups of the third year at Tebessa University, A sample was the entire population of third-year students. Therefore, two groups were chosen for this study (an experimental and a control group). Thus, being a teacher of the written expression module of both groups simplifies the operation. The total number of participants amounted to sixty-four students between 21-25 years old; each group equally includes thirty-two students.

5.3 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 64 students at Tebessa University. That was in the first semester of the academic year 2018/2019.

The sample was equally divided into two groups, 32 students were in the control group, and 32 students were in the experimental group.

5.4 Research question:

The question that this research is attempting to answer is:

-Does the use of TBLT develop third-year EFL students' writing performance at Tebessa University?

5.5 Hypothesis

After applying TBLT approach, third-year EFL students' writing performance will develop, revealing a statistically significant difference between the pre/post-tests of both groups.

5.6 Objective of the Study

In this study, we intend to develop third-year EFL students' writing performance by implementing TBLT at the English department at Tebessa University, hoping to provide some practical suggestions for English teachers in our University.

5.7 Significance of the Study

This study attempts to use a program to investigate Task-based language teaching on developing EFL students' writing performance. It may change some teaching methods relevant to writing skills and encourage teachers to apply task-based language teaching during teaching writing skills.

5.8 Limitations of the Study

We will restrict this study to third-year EFL students at Al Larbi Tbessi University, Tebessa, Algeria. The results and findings of this experimental investigation are limited only to this population of students. A limited duration for implementing the proposed program may be another restriction. The current treatment period is limited to eight weeks in the first semester of 2018/2019.

5.9 Data Collection Procedures

The data in the present study were collected quantitatively using three instruments: (1) a writing pre-test before receiving training, (2) training for six weeks, and (3) a writing post-test after receiving training in the first semester of 2018/2019. The intervention of different tasks that help students improve their writing performance separated the two tests.

The materials for the pre/post tests included the same topic. The test format is conducted where each group discusses a topic.

5.9.1 Writing pre-test

Before the training was given to the experimental

group students, the participants in the two groups (control and experimental) were asked to discuss the following topic in an essay form: ‘education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.’”

This instrument aimed to determine the students’ writing performance before receiving any training on writing. It is a kind of a diagnostic test to get an idea about our students’ initial level. The scores obtained from the pre-test were kept to be compared with the control group’s scores. Both groups took the test on the same day.

5.9.2. treatment

After exposing students to the pre-tests, the experimental group students had received training using the TBLT approach for six weeks, where they attended eight writing lessons. The department of English at the university of Tebessa officially planned the program for the written expression module. The following syllabus includes how to write an argumentative essay, definition essay, descriptive essay, narrative essay, cause /effect essay, and a comparison essay.

The treatment sessions consisted of the following:

- One session was specified to conduct the writing pre-test.
- Six sessions were specified for giving students instruction on writing the types of essays.
- One session was specified to conduct the writing post-test.

5.9.3 Writing post-test

After receiving treatment using the TBLT approach for six weeks, the students were asked to write a post-test on the following “define one of the following terms marriage, respect, happiness, hope or family” in the form of a definition essay.

The purpose of the post-test was to find out whether the adoption of Jane Willis’ TBLT framework in writing classes can improve the Third year EFL students’ writing skills or not. This was achieved by

comparing the students’ scores in the control group with their counterparts’ scores in the experimental group, before and after treatment. The mean scores obtained from the post-test of each group of students were employed to answer the research question.

Then the teacher assessed those pieces of writing according to the provided writing scale.

The researcher informed the participants that the essay writing was undertaken without time restriction to allow them to move space to write accurately to have an impromptu performance. They have given one hour and a half to enable them to think over their opinions and ideas individually and write them down in their papers; at the end of the session, the students gave their papers back to the teacher, who is the researcher herself. The researcher assessed participants’ essays of the writing test. She analysed their answers, giving each student a mark out of 20.

The Treatment materials included different tasks and activities following the TBLT lesson sequence. Six workshops were designed within the framework for Task-Based Language Teaching, including pre-task, During task (planning report and performing the task), and post-task (language focus).

6.DataAnalysis

6.1 Writing performance assessment criteria (evaluation grid)

Table (1) below is a sample of the evaluation grid used by the researcher for data gathering during the pre-test and the post-test. It shows the elements meant for interpretation and analysis in students’ written production and emphasises the writing performance elements introduced earlier. The following table also provides details and the rates attributed to each element.

Throughout the current study tests, the four components of the dependent variable will be assessed and tested separately. For the analysis, students’ performances were assessed from one to five for each criterion. Then, the whole essay will have a final mark out of 20.

Table 1**Assessment grid used in the current study**

| Style component | Evaluation | Significance and interpretation |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Cohesion | Excellent 5 | Linguistic Devices very well tie together the text |
| | Average 3 | Acceptable with some strains |
| | poor 1 | Sentences are not adequately linked together |
| Coherence | Excellent 5 | The text follows a clear, logical order, and the organisation of ideas is systematic |
| | Average 3 | Acceptable with some strains |
| | poor 1 | The sentences do not convey the same message ((content |
| Word choice | Excellent 5 | Appropriate word choice that communicates the idea |
| | Average 3 | There are irrelevant words |
| | poor 1 | A lot of insufficient content words |
| Grammar | Excellent 5 | Excellent respect of grammar |
| | Average 3 | Some errors (tenses, sentence forms, surface (.structure |
| | poor 1 | Serious problems in grammar |

6.2 Statistical Tests

After marking the students' writing production using the criteria mentioned above and analysing the data obtained using the two writing tests (pre-test and post-test), the student's scores in the control and experimental groups were keyed into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS V.22) to prepare for analysis. A statistical test was used (SPSS Independent sample T-Test).

6.3 Results of both groups in the pre-test

The pre-test use aims to determine the initial level of the participants before starting the treatment. Therefore,

64 students, forming control and experimental groups, took a pre-test. We have assessed the four elements suggested in the review of the related literature as devices of good writing performance. As shown in table (1), these are cohesion, coherence, word choice, and grammar.

As stated in the table, each student's performance is assessed in isolation and according to the four writing performance elements. Then, the last essays of both groups were globally assessed as one whole corpus. Each performance's final grade ranges from 1 for an inferior text to 20 for an excellent one.

The following table (2) describes the pre-test results of the 64 test-takers.

Table 2**Students' achievement in the pre-test (Control and experimental groups)**

| Control group | | Experimental group | |
|---------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Students | Scores | Students | Scores |
| Student01 | 10 | Student01 | 08 |
| Student02 | 08 | Student02 | 10 |
| Student03 | 06 | Student03 | 12 |
| Student04 | 06 | Student04 | 06 |
| Student05 | 08 | Student05 | 06 |
| Student06 | 12 | Student06 | 08 |
| Student07 | 12 | Student07 | 10 |
| Student08 | 14 | Student08 | 12 |
| Student09 | 04 | Student09 | 06 |
| Student10 | 04 | Student10 | 08 |
| Student11 | 04 | Student11 | 04 |
| Student12 | 06 | Student12 | 04 |
| Student13 | 06 | Student13 | 10 |
| Student14 | 08 | Student14 | 04 |
| Student15 | 12 | Student15 | 04 |
| Student16 | 10 | Student16 | 12 |
| Student17 | 10 | Student17 | 14 |
| Student18 | 04 | Student18 | 08 |
| Student19 | 06 | Student19 | 10 |
| Student20 | 08 | Student20 | 08 |
| Student21 | 12 | Student21 | 06 |
| Student22 | 12 | Student22 | 04 |
| Student23 | 08 | Student23 | 06 |
| Student24 | 06 | Student24 | 08 |
| Student25 | 14 | Student25 | 10 |
| Student26 | 12 | Student26 | 12 |
| Student27 | 12 | Student27 | 08 |
| Student28 | 06 | Student28 | 06 |
| Student29 | 10 | Student29 | 08 |
| Student30 | 10 | Student30 | 10 |
| Student31 | 06 | Student31 | 14 |
| Student32 | 08 | Student32 | 06 |

The following are some examples from the students' essays as they are with mistakes:

“the education it’s the base or the platform of any culture, so all the peoples through all the generations were focus on the education to rise a good peoples, and good level of education”

“...the 20th century was a cicle of huge changes concerning education because in that time the computers; this smart machine which linked by internet, was colonised the houses, the classrooms, the companies, hospitals...etc this inovation changed many domains.”

“...and also the studiants were developed and take a new of thinking and analysing and also there point of view concerning education.”

“...and in that way the education became more confortable and easy somehow, the students can prepare there lessons from computers, can discuss it with others.”

“education must be the top priority of any nation because it is the only way that would make the world better, because with well educated people, there would not be conflicts or wars in the world, inadition to that cures will be discovered, thus many lives will be saved”

As revealed in this table, students of third-year introduced a precise inadequate writing performance. After a detailed evaluation of the four writing performance components, the researcher noticed that the students encountered severe difficulties and problems that led to inappropriate writing performance. These results provided evidence for the existence of writing skills problems for third-year students in our department. Theoretically, the ideal score would be 20 for the participants. However, the table's results show that students' scores are beyond teachers' expectations and far from excellent.

6.4 Results of both groups in the post-test

Table3

Students' achievement in the Posttest (Control and experimental groups)

| Control group | | E x p e r i m e n t a l group | |
|---------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------|
| Students | Scores | Students | Scores |
| Student01 | 10 | Student01 | 16 |
| Student02 | 08 | Student02 | 14 |
| Student03 | 08 | Student03 | 12 |
| Student04 | 14 | Student04 | 14 |
| Student05 | 12 | Student05 | 18 |
| Student06 | 08 | Student06 | 20 |
| Student07 | 10 | Student07 | 14 |
| Student08 | 14 | Student08 | 12 |
| Student09 | 12 | Student09 | 14 |
| Student10 | 14 | Student10 | 12 |
| Student11 | 08 | Student11 | 14 |
| Student12 | 12 | Student12 | 12 |
| Student13 | 12 | Student13 | 10 |
| Student14 | 10 | Student14 | 12 |
| Student15 | 10 | Student15 | 16 |
| Student16 | 08 | Student16 | 16 |
| Student17 | 10 | Student17 | 16 |
| Student18 | 08 | Student18 | 14 |
| Student19 | 12 | Student19 | 16 |
| Student20 | 12 | Student20 | 14 |
| Student21 | 10 | Student21 | 16 |
| Student22 | 14 | Student22 | 14 |
| Student23 | 12 | Student23 | 14 |
| Student24 | 10 | Student24 | 12 |
| Student25 | 08 | Student25 | 12 |
| Student26 | 06 | Student26 | 18 |
| Student27 | 10 | Student27 | 10 |
| Student28 | 10 | Student28 | 12 |
| Student29 | 10 | Student29 | 14 |
| Student30 | 12 | Student30 | 16 |
| Student31 | 06 | Student31 | 12 |
| Student32 | 08 | Student32 | 14 |

The following are some examples from the students' essays after the treatment

“family, with its connotative meaning, means everything good in the world. It means security, love, and care shared by numbers of that family.”

“hope is the foundation of achieving whatever you want in your life because it provides you with determination, discipline, and a strong will.”

“respect refers to recognising the values of people and treating them with care and concern.”

“...from a sociolinguistic perspective, the family reflects the society because the individuals of the family grow up on a specific behaviour, habits, educational level, and culture and those aspects represent and build the person’s personality.”

“Marriage in its technical term means the union of two people under legal and sometimes religious circumstances. Some people say that marriage is an absolute aspect in life, and it is necessary to occur in order to achieve harmony and balance.”

7.Results and Discussion

In this study, the researcher administered a writing pre-test for the experimental and control groups to measure their writing performance before experimenting. The results of the analysis of the pre-test scores are shown in the following table

Table 4
Means of scores on the pre-test of both groups

| Groups | Pre-test |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Experimental group | 8,37 |
| Control group | 8,56 |
| Differences in the means | 0,19 |

The table representing the pre-test means of scores reveals that the control group recorded a little numerically little higher than the experimental group (the mean difference is only 0,19). This insignificant overscoring puts us in a position to claim that the writing level is almost the same. Hence, any further overscoring in the coming test will be due to the experimental instructions.

Table 5
Means of scores on the post-test of both groups

| Groups | Posttest |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Experimental group | 14,06 |
| Control group | 10,25 |
| Differences in the means | 3,81 |

According to the table above results, the experimental group scored higher than the control group(the mean difference is 3,81). This significant difference confirms that this progress is a result of the TBLT treatment. The instruction allowed the participants of the experimental group to learn and enhance their writing performance. Therefore, they obtained better results than the other participants who received the traditional instruction.

7.1Statistical Analysis and Interpretation of Results

To ascertain the difference between the experimental and control groups in post-test written performances in a detailed statistical account, we need to handle quantitative data, including calculating the frequency distribution of scores, the mean, the variance, the standard deviation, and finally, checking the validity of all the statistical results using the T-test.

T-Test Results. To calculate the T-test for the post-test data, the investigator follows these steps:

Step one: Stating the H1 and H0. The alternative hypothesis and the null hypothesis are stated as follows:

- The alternative hypothesis “H1”: there is a significant difference between the means of the control group and the experimental group in favour of the experimental group.
- The null hypothesis “H0”: there is no significant difference between the means of the experimental group and the control group.

Step two: Alpha decision level. The investigator needs to select a probability level in order to support H1 and reject H0. Indeed, this helps us decide whether the difference between the two groups is due to chance or treatment, TBLT. According to Brown (1994), “The language researcher should once again set the alpha decision level in advance. The level may be at α 0.05 or at the more conservative α 0.01, if the decisions must be more sure” (p. 159). The probability level or alpha level (α) set up at “0.05” in this research. That is to say, we have the probability of 5 % that the difference between the two groups is due to chance, or only a 5% chance of error can be accepted.

Step three: Frequency. A clear picture of the frequency

distribution of the post-test for both groups are shown in the Tables mean (\bar{X}) of each group.

Table 6
Frequency Distribution of the Scores in the Posttest of the Experimental group

| Scores x | x ² | Frequency "F" | Frequency score Fx | Square of Frequency Score Fx ² |
|----------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|---|
| 10 | 100 | 02 | 20 | 200 |
| 12 | 144 | 09 | 108 | 1296 |
| 14 | 196 | 11 | 154 | 2156 |
| 16 | 256 | 07 | 112 | 1792 |
| 18 | 324 | 02 | 36 | 648 |
| 20 | 400 | 01 | 20 | 400 |
| | 1420 | 32 | 450 | 6492 |

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$$

$$\bar{X} = \frac{450}{32}$$

$$\bar{X} = 14,06$$

$$\bar{X}_{cont} = 10,25$$

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$$

$$\bar{X} = \frac{450}{32}$$

$$\bar{X}_{exp} = 14,06$$

Step five. The Variance. The researcher calculates the variance (S^2) of the two groups.

$$S^2 = \frac{\sum Fx^2}{N} - \bar{X}^2$$

$$S^2_{exp} = \frac{\sqrt{6492}}{32} - (14,06)^2$$

$$S^2_{exp} = \frac{\sqrt{6492}}{32} - 197,68$$

$$S^2_{exp} = 202,87 - 197,68$$

$$S^2_{exp} = 5,19$$

$$S^2_{cont} = \frac{\sqrt{3520}}{32} - (10,25)^2$$

$$S^2_{cont} = \frac{\sqrt{3520}}{32} - 105,06$$

$$S^2_{cont} = 110 - 105,06$$

$$S^2_{cont} = 4,94$$

Table 7
Frequency Distribution of the Scores in the Post-test of the Control Group

| Scores x | x ² | Frequency "F" | Frequency score Fx | Square of Frequency Score Fx ² |
|----------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|---|
| 06 | 36 | 02 | 12 | 72 |
| 08 | 64 | 08 | 64 | 512 |
| 10 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 1000 |
| 12 | 144 | 08 | 96 | 1152 |
| 14 | 196 | 04 | 56 | 784 |
| | 540 | 32 | 328 | 3520 |

Step six: Standard deviation. In this step, we calculate the standard deviation (**SD**) of both groups.

$$SD_{exp} = \frac{\sqrt{207744 - 202500}}{1024 - 32}$$

$$SD_{exp} = \frac{\sqrt{5244}}{992}$$

$$SD_{exp} = \sqrt{5,28}$$

$$SD_{exp} = 2,29$$

$$SD = \frac{\sqrt{N \sum Fx^2 - (\sum Fx)^2}}{N(N-1)}$$

$$SD_{cont} = \frac{\sqrt{32(3520) - 328^2}}{32(32-1)}$$

$$SD_{cont} = \frac{\sqrt{112640 - 107584}}{992}$$

As the tables above demonstrate, the scores' frequency ranges from 10 to 20 for the experimental group and 6 to 14 for the control group in the post-test. The mode score is 14 for the experimental group and 10 for the control group. No score is below average for the experimental group; two scores equal average and 30 above average. However, we recorded ten scores under average for the control group, ten equal average, and 12 above the average.

Step four: Mean. The researcher calculates the

$$SD_{cont} = \frac{\sqrt{5056}}{992}$$

$$SD_{cont} = \sqrt{5,09}$$

$$SD_{cont} = 2,25$$

Step seven: Degree of Freedom. According to Brown (1995), “the degree of freedom (df) for the t-test of independent means is the first sample size minus one plus the second sample size minus one” (p.167). It helps to find the critical value for “t”. In the present case, the df=62.

$$df = (N_1 - 1) + (N_2 - 1)$$

$$df = (32 - 1) + (32 - 1)$$

$$df = 31 + 31$$

$$df = 62$$

Step eight: t-value. The **T-test** is considered to be the most practical test to compare two means. It is used to find out whether there are statistically significant differences between two groups or two tests. For calculating the **T** value, the following formula needs to be applied:

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2) \sqrt{(N_1 + N_2 - 2)N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1S_1^2 + N_2S_2^2)(N_1 + N_2)}}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{(14,06 - 10,25) \sqrt{(32 + 32 - 2)32 \times 32}}{\sqrt{(32 \times 5,19 + 32 \times 4,94)(32 + 32)}}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{(3,81) \sqrt{62 \times 1024}}{\sqrt{(166,08 + 158,08)(64)}}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{(3,81) \sqrt{63488}}{\sqrt{(324,16)(64)}}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{(3,81) \times 251,96}{\sqrt{(20746,24)}}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = \frac{959,96}{144,03}$$

$$t_{N_1 + N_2} = 6,69$$

Critical Value

According to the T-test results, the alpha level is set at $\alpha < 0.05$, $df = 62$. In this respect, according to t- table of critical values, the corresponding critical value for T is 1,67, and then we get $T_{obs} 6,69 > T_{crit} 1,67$ As the observed T value is greater than the critical T value, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative

hypothesis is accepted. The mean scores between the experimental and control groups were different due to the treatment’s effect, not due to chance.

Hypotheses testing

Now, we have collected the necessary information for testing our hypothesis

Statistical hypotheses:

$$H_0 : \bar{X}_e = \bar{X}_c$$

$$H_1 : \bar{X}_e > \bar{X}_c$$

Alpha Level: $\alpha < .05$, one-tailed (directional) decision.

Observed statistics: $t_{obs} = 6,69$

Critical value: $t_{crit} = 1,67$

Degree of freedom: $df = 62$

Since the observed statistic is greater than the critical value ($6,69 > 1,67$), the null hypothesis is rejected. Having rejected the null hypothesis, then the alternative hypothesis H_1 is automatically accepted.

This result means that there is only a 05% probability that the observed mean difference: $\bar{X}_e > \bar{X}_c$ ($14,06 > 10,25$) occurred by chance.

The interpretation of results should have two parts: significance and meaningfulness. Hence, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected at $P < .05$, indicating that the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable did not occur by chance. It was due to the Task-Based Language Teaching approach, which contributed to developing and improving experimental group participants’ writing performance.

The results indicated a significant difference between the traditional teaching and task-based language teaching groups as they are statistically significant.

In this study, we have investigated the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching on EFL students’ writings at the university level. In other words, Task-Based Language Teaching proved to help improve the experimental group writing performance and encouraged them to engage in the writing process.

Our results are compatible with the previous studies such as the works of Pragasam(2018)and Zhaochun(2015), which implies that the Task-Based

Language Teaching approach helped create a friendly atmosphere where students collaborate and interact in writing classes. There have been various studies conducted in recent years pointing to the positive impact of TBLT on the writing ability of learners, such as Latchem, Latchem, & Jung (2010); Pourdana, Behbahani, & Safdari (2011). Latchem et al (2010) concluded that the task-based approach enhanced learners' aspects of English writing, including vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and cohesion. The findings of the current research corroborated the findings of such studies. The outcomes of this study are in line with the study results of Alavi and Tabar (2012), who found that the use of TBLT improved the writing accuracy among Iranian EFL students. Also, these findings are in line with the results of a study conducted by Han (2014), who found that TBLT developed students' writing performance among university students in China. Zhaochun (2015) reached similar findings in his study that applied the TBLT approach to find out the impact of this approach on students' writing performance, and he found that TBLT positively influenced the students' writing skills.

Therefore, using the Task-Based Language Teaching approach helped students of the experimental group improve their writings compared to the control group, who were taught via traditional methods. As a result, students get motivated to do their best, put more effort into their writings and rely on themselves for correction to become autonomous and better writers.

8. Conclusion

The current research is carried out to help university students develop their writing performance. We can realise that learning to write in foreign languages is challenging even at the university level. We can conclude that the participants' writing performance in the experimental group improved noticeably after six weeks of using the TBLT approach. This learning approach affected them substantially as they improved their writing aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and cohesion. This study indicates that the use of TBLT in writing was successful in developing EFL students writing performance. It can also be

concluded that applying the TBLT approach to EFL students writing classrooms at Tebessa University can significantly improve their writing performance, which involves improvement on several writing sub-skills. We hope that this research would contribute to foreign language learning and pedagogy.

Based on the findings of the present study, the researcher recommended the following:

1-EFL teachers are recommended to use the TBLT approach in teaching writing skills in their classrooms to help students overcome their writing performance challenges.

2-Textbook authors, curriculum designers, and EFL teachers are recommended to include TBL in their teaching materials and focus on developing cohesion, coherence, and grammar in the writing skills section.

3-Students should practice writing inside and outside the classroom because it is beneficial to develop their writing skills, and as such, their writings will make sense.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Authors whose names are listed below declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organisation or entity with any financial or personal interest in the subject matter of this manuscript.

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