

The Effect of Task Base Language Teaching (TBLT) on Tertiary ESOL Learners' Academic Writing Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of Task Base Language Teaching (TBLT) on tertiary ESOL learners' academic writing achievement in tertiary level. Therefore, the experimental research was applied to this study. The control group was taught through Classical Method (CM) while the experiment group was taught through Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method. Furthermore, the pre-test and post-test were administered to students in control group and experiment group (30 students in each group). The data were tabulated by employing t-test in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. Based on the data analysis, the result indicated that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. It can be concluded that there was a significant effect of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method on tertiary ESOL learners' writing achievement compared to Classical Method (CM) of teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

English is an important language now days for everyone in the world in any purposes such as medium of study, job requirement, and communication in society and even for life status. Therefore, every country emphasizes that English subject should be taught in school, college and university but of course the result of the teaching and learning process is different since it is depending on the approach and practice of teaching English itself.

On the other hand, every country has recognized that in teaching and learning English, there are four skills that need to be taught to the students namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In so doing, the students in every level of education should master those four skills event many countries put the minimum criteria for every English language skill.

Universitas Negeri Medan is one of the universities, which has English Department. The students in this department are taking English and Literature as their major but it does not mean that they could use English properly in their academic activities since they were still in foundation level. In addition, most of the students are from rural area and they hardly use English in their daily life. Therefore, language skills are kind of difficult subjects for them especially writing skill because practically, writing skill is taught after the three

other language skills because writing skill is very complicated and tends to be avoided by Indonesian learners [1].

Furthermore, Academic writing, one of the genres in writing skills, is very difficult and it needs a long time to improve the ESOL learners' academic writing achievements [2]. Therefore, it should be notified that writing skill is not a product but it is rather a process for both native speakers and learners of ESOL. Even though writing skill is a skill, which most of students do not like to learn because it is not only difficult but also boring, there is of course a way to teach the learners on this skill.

Literally, there have been so many methods of teaching writing skill implemented in university level but many agree to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson who said that there is no single best method in teaching English but may be there is an appropriate method to the student context [3]. Fundamentally, there are differences among the methods. One of the significant differences is in 1976; Wilkins distinguished between two types of syllabi, which are synthetic syllabi and analytic syllabi. Synthetic syllabi focus on linguistics units: grammar, structures, vocabulary items, functions, etc [4]. Then, it is the students' responsibility to implement the linguistic units for the purpose of communication. On the other hand, analytic syllabi are well organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are important to meet those objectives [4]. Current result of research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) supports the use of analytic syllabi because such research shows that learners do not learn linguistics part one in a time. Instead, they induce linguistic information from the language samples they work on, and they acquire language items only when they are ready to do so [3].

In accordance with, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is the method of teaching language in which language is acquired through use. This method is the strong version of the communicative approach, and this method implies the use of analytic syllabi [3, 5]. Therefore, the implementation of TBLT to enhance the ESOL learners' achievement in writing skill is strongly supported in Indonesian context. In so doing, this research crucially needed to be conducted to investigate the effect of the TBLT method on ESOL learners' academic writing achievement.

1.2. Objectives of Study

In accordance with the background of study, the objectives of this study are formulated as below:

- 1) To test the significant difference between experimental and control groups when the ESOL learners were taught by using TBLT method and Classical method respectively.
- 2) To test the significant effect of TBLT method on ESOL learners' academic writing achievement in Indonesia.

1.3. Task Bases Language Teaching

One of the most prominent perspectives within the CLT framework is Task Base Language Teaching (TBLT). While other researcher [6] argues that TBLT is significantly different approach, other proponent [7] would claim that TBLT is at the very heart of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This approach put the use of task at the core of language teaching. Where there is a good deal of variation among experts on how to illustrate task, the concept of task still captures the essentials [8]. Task is defined as an activity in which [8]:

- Meaning is primary
- There is some communication problem to solve
- There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- Task completion has some priority; and
- The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

On the other hand, task is an activity, which requires learners to use language, which emphasis on meaning, to attain objectives [9]. Furthermore, Task-base teaching makes an important distinction between target tasks, which students must accomplish beyond the classroom, and pedagogical task, which form the nucleus of the classroom activity.

Task-base instruction is not actually a new method. Rather, it puts task at the center of one's methodological focus. It views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve, the purpose of which extend beyond the practice of language for its own sake. Research on task-base learning, some study has attempted to identify types tasks that enhance learning (such as open-ended, structured, teacher-fronted, small group, and pair work) to define task-specific learner factors (for example, roles, proficiency levels, and styles), and to examine teacher roles and other variables that contribute to successful achievement of objectives. [6], [7], [10]-[12].

Therefore, the concept above leads to the characteristics of Task Base Language Teaching (TBLT) as follows:

- Task ultimately point learners beyond the forms of language alone to real-world contexts.
- Tasks specifically contribute to communicative goals.
- Their elements are carefully designed and not simply haphazardly or idiosyncratically thrown together.
- Their objectives are well specified so that you can at some later point accurately determine the success of one task over another.
- Tasks engage learners, at some level, in genuine problem-solving activity.

1.4. Writing Achievement

Writing is a process of formulating and organizing ideas in appropriate language to send the passage through a piece of paper. According to Jones in Cooper and Odell [13] writing is synonymous with discourse, and discourse is discussed in terms of its aims, it relate to the function of language, and in terms of its feature, which are the separate elements, devices, and mechanism of language. On the other hand, Reinking, Hard and Osten [14] state that writing is a way of communication and of course communicates all the time. And then Deporter and Heracki [15] explain that writing is a whole brain activity, which uses right brain side (emotion) and left-brain side (logic).

From the experts' definitions, it can be stated that writing is a composition task to formulate and organize ideas in proper language to deliver and communicate the passage to the reader and present it on a piece of paper. In order to deliver the passage effectively, the writing logically should be effective as well. Travers [16] states that achievement is the result of what an individual has learned from some education experience. Then, Yelon, Weinstein, and Weener [17] express achievement as the successfulness of individual learning, while another source Smith and Hudgins [18] says that achievement is to do one's best, to be successful to accomplish tasks requiring skill and effort and to be recognized by authority.

Completely, achievement is the result, the successfulness, the extent or ability, the progress in learning education experiences that the individual indicates relation with his/her educational learning. Achievement concerns with what someone has actually learnt whereas aptitude is the potential for learning something. In other words, achievement is a success in reaching particular goal/status or standard, especially by effort, skill, courage, and so on. Therefore, the writing achievement is the successfulness of the learners in fulfilling the requirement in composing the writing task. The achievement in writing in this case is if the students can write the essay properly and fulfill all the indicators in writing rubrics.

1.5. Review of TBLT on Writing

Task-based writing instruction within the larger framework of TBLT makes learners involved in active mutual work on tasks that are reasonable for them and related to their real life experience [19, 20]. Concerning writing task features, researchers have argued over some characteristics of tasks such as the amount of time available to learners, [21] whether the task is completed individually or collaboratively [22], whether the task is reciprocal or nonreciprocal [23], and concluded that all these factors affect the process of learning how to write.

There exist different types of tasks to foster the writing performance of the learners. Yet despite their diversity, task-based writing activities "are done with the purpose of producing something, reaching a conclusion, or creating a whole picture of something within a preset framework" [24]. Furthermore, numerous researches had been done by many scholars on the effectiveness of TBLT to writing skill. Most of the result of the study tended to support the use of TBLT method to teach writing skill for instance: Jong [25] did a survey to 228 English teachers in Korea. From the survey, 67.5 % agreed TBLT improves learners' interaction skill. On the other way of research, Marashi and Dadari [26] had conducted an experimental research on the impact of using task-base writing on EFL learners' writing performance and creativity. The participants of the study were 56 Tehran's private language school. They found that there was a significant effect on students' writing performance and creativity.

Furthermore, TBLT benefited both teacher and students since it reduce the stress for teaching big classes. In addition, students found more opportunities to clarify meaning through interaction and negotiation of meaning and they were willing to cooperative with their class-mates [27]. Current other findings come from Ahmad and Bidin [28], they did experimental research on the effect of TBLT on writing skills of EFL learners in Malaysia. From the results, they concluded that there was an improvement in writing L2 performance indicators in terms of L2 complexity, fluency, and accuracy of students' writing.

Based on the review of the theories and result of the previous researches, TBLT is a useful method to teach writing on any level of students. Therefore, it is undeniable to implement TBLT method to teach writing in Indonesia and conduct an experimental research to find the effect of TBLT on Indonesian students

writing achievement. In concordance with the theory and previous researches, hypothesis of this research has been formulated.

1.6. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research can be formulated in terms of (Ha and Ho). Ha- means *alternative hypothesis* and Ho- means *null hypothesis*.

Ho: There is no significant impact of applying TBLT method on students' writing achievement.

Ha: There is significant impact of applying TBLT method on students' writing achievement.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Participants

This study was conducted with 30 students in experimental group and 30 students in control group. The students are from English Department, *Universitas Negeri Medan*. Actually, the students are taking English Language Teaching Program but they are still in foundation level (semester **ONE (1)** and **TWO (2)**). The population in both semesters was 180 students. The ranges of the ages are from 19 to 21 years old. Furthermore, the students were selected by using random sampling technique because the population has the equal chance to be a sample in this study.

2.2. Materials

Academic Writing: the material used in teaching and test the students' academic writing is *Achieve IELTS 2 English for International Education; Second Edition*". This book is following the Common European Framework of References (CEFR), in which this book is suitable for B2 to C1 Level or Band 5.5 to 7 in IELTS score. Furthermore, this book is written by Louis Harrison, Caroline Cushen and Susan Hutchison and published in 2013. From this book, the students were only taught academic writing task 1, which is descriptive and report writing.

Writing Rubric/Evaluation Checklist: The rubric is taken from takeielts.britishcouncil.org. This rubric applied 4 indicators in assessing the writing task 1. The 4 indicators are task achievement, coherent and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy. The band given is from 0 to 9. For additional information, this rubric is used by British Council, IDP and University of Cambridge ESOL examination.

2.3. Instrument

Composition test: writing pre-test and post-test were administered to both groups of students, which are experimental and control groups. The test was asking the students to describe and report the data given in charts. The chart gives information about science qualifications held by people in two countries. Thus, the task was only asking the students to summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant but the students were only given 30 minutes to complete the writing task and they need to write about 150 words.

2.4. Procedures

Step one: Preparation for the materials, test and measuring the validity and reliability of the test was administrated and tabulated. The material that had been set up for the treatment was teaching materials for IELTS Writing Task 1 including lesson plan, topic explanation, writing task and exercise. In order to measure the validity of the test, the constructive validity was conducted. The writing test had been validated by two experts in writing skills. The two experts are from State University of Medan and Australian Centre in Medan City. Then, for the reliability of the test, the researcher used the inter rater reliability test that was using the two experts to score the students writing test in pilot study. The examiners were two lecturers in the English Education Study Program, State University of Medan. The result shows that there was no great discrepancy among the score mean from the first, and the second examiner on scoring the tertiary ESOL learners' writing task 1 with the fact that by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program 21.0 Version, the result of the Inter Rater Reliability (IRR) or Kappa on the students' writing score was 0.7.

Step two: after selecting the sample by using random sampling technique, the pre-test was administrated to the samples. Then, both groups had been taught for four meetings each. The treatment was teaching the experimental group through the implementation Task-Base Language Teaching method, while the control was taught through the implementation of classical method. The treatment for the experimental group was implementing Task-Base Language Teaching (TBLT) method. There are three (3) stages in implementing the TBLT method, namely pre-task, during-task and post-task. The activities in each stage are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Treatment for Experimental Group

Stage	Task	Task Base Language Teaching
		Activities
1	Pre-Task	<p>1) Giving Knowledge This activity has two objectives. First is to teach, mobilize or make prominent the language that relates to the task itself, for example, the useful vocabulary or important functionality sentence patterns. Second is to provide students with some background knowledge so as to help them recall schematic knowledge when completing the task. The teacher may hand out materials on related topics, such as Comparison, Present Tense and Past Tense, Adverb and so on.</p> <p>2) Collecting Data The students will do a simple survey on related topic, such as “<i>car choices by workers in Malaysia</i>”. The students were given table of survey which contained car choices and choices of the reasons to choose the car. Each student did the survey to 20 workers in Malaysia. Then they have to do it individually.</p> <p>3) Create the Chart/s After filling in the table, the students were asked to draw or create the charts for the their table as the result of their survey. Then, they had to show the charts to the lecturer to make sure whether they did the correct charts for their data or not.</p>
2	During-Task	<p>1) Pair Work At this stage, the students are encouraged to engage as much as possible in the tasks and to complete them. The teacher may write some questions or instructions related to their survey result on the whiteboard for the students to discuss, for example: <i>Identify the main trends for each mode.</i> <i>Identify any large increases or decreases.</i> <i>Are there any clear and consistent directions?</i> <i>Does anything seem surprising?</i> <i>Are there any clear relationships between modes or percentages?</i> Then the teacher can divide the students into pairs to discuss these questions. Meanwhile, the teacher should not intervene in the students’ discussion so as to allow natural language acquisition processes to operate; but whenever the students need help, the teacher should stand out. After this preliminary discussion, the students may be asked to report the results of their pair work.</p> <p>2) Group Discussion Compared with pair work, the advantage of group discussion is self-evident: every participant has his share of information to contribute to the communication process, and therefore more participants made the communication livelier and more meaningful. At the same time, the teacher should monitor the whole process and offer help if possible. The students were divided into small groups of more than three people to re-discuss the above questions and to determine what they wrote.</p> <p>3) First Draft Students can think over what they have discussed up till now, and plunge directly into writing. At this moment, the students should not worry about grammatical mistakes, and all they should do is to put down their ideas. At this stage, the teacher should withdraw so as not to prevent the natural flow of the students’ ideas and their expressiveness. This is also done to elicit personal opinions from students so as to get them more involved in the completion of the task. As for this kind of writing, students’ task is to put the information onto paper in a logical manner, not worrying about grammar, spelling or handwriting.</p> <p>4) Discussion of the Product After the completion of the first draft, the students were divided into small groups, and a group leader was nominated. Students were required to exchange their first drafts of writing and criticisms concerning vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, structure and logic were welcome. It was then the group leader’s duty to report the results of the group discussion.</p>
3	Post-Task	<p>On this stage, the emphasis is on the meaningfulness and fluency of the communication process, and the expressiveness of ideas. However, this alone could not guarantee good writing in itself, as we also need accuracy and refined language to call good writing. Therefore, at this stage, the teacher should direct the students’ attention to the accuracy of language and the way of restructuring their sentences so as to better their writing. Based on the group leader’s report, the teacher got a brief idea of the students’ weaknesses and strengths. In order to present in a more clear way, the teacher could write down the language points, chunks or functionality patterns on the whiteboard.</p>

After the treatment, post-test were administered to both groups. Then, the scores of pre-test and post-test from both groups were collected as quantitative data.

Step three: the data were tabulated by using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 21. Since this study is to examine the effect of Task-Base Language Teaching (TBLT) method on the students writing achievement, the data were tabulated by using independent sample t-test, which means to examine the difference between (pre-test and post-test) control and (pre-test-test and post-test) experimental groups.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Before running the required parametric test, the normality of contribution assumption was confirmed. Then, t-test was employed to examine the effect of TBLT method on tertiary ESOL learners' academic writing achievements. As a result, the comparison of control and experimental groups are shown on the table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic for Control and Experimental Groups' Writing Scores.

	Group Statistics				
	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Difference	Control	30	.500	.57235	.10450
	Experiment	30	1.867	.81931	.14958

Table 1 shows the values of means and standard deviation along with standard error of the mean for the two groups on academic writing. The mean score of the experimental group was 1.367 points higher than that of the control group in terms of. In conclusion, the experimental group outperformed the control group. To show clearly the difference between control and experimental group, the estimated marginal means of difference between both groups are presented on the following figure.

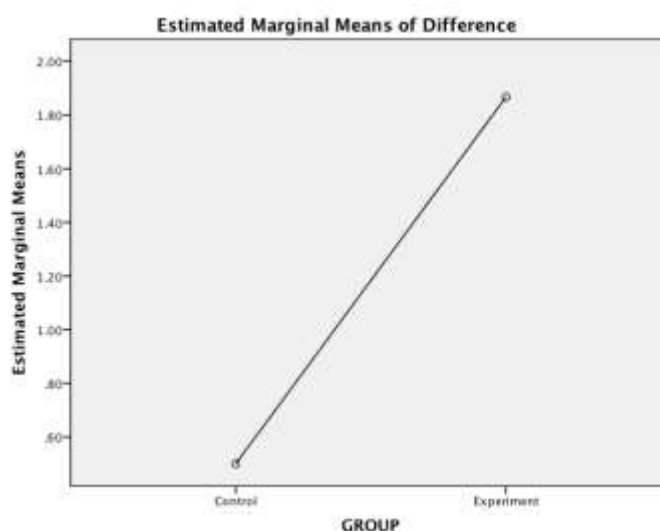


Figure 1. Significant Difference between Control and Experimental Scores Mean

Table 2. Descriptive Statics for T-test Result

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Difference	Equal variances assumed	.344	.560	-7.49	58	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.49	51.86	.000

The t-test procedure (table 2) offered two tests of the contrast between the control and experimental groups. In terms of writing score mean, the significance index of the Levene statistic was .560 (greater than .05); it could be assumed that the groups had equal variances. Based on Table 2, there was significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in terms of their academic writing scores ($F=0.344$, $p=0.00<0.05$). Therefore, the control and experimental groups were not at the same level of achievement in terms of their writing ability in the administered academic writing test.

3.1. Testing the Null Hypothesis

In order to test the hypothesis, the ANCOVA was run to examine the effect of the TBLT method on tertiary ESOL learner' academic achievement. The result is presented on the following table.

Table 3. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable: Difference					Partial Eta Squared
	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
GROUP	28.017	1	28.017	56.098	.000	.492

a. R Squared = .492 (Adjusted R Squared = .483)

Despite the difference prior to the treatment, the effect of the treatment indeed turned out to be statistically significant ($F=56.096$, $p=0.00<0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis of the study which stated that using Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method had no significant effect on tertiary ESOL learners' academic writing achievement was rejected with those receiving the treatment outperforming significantly those in the control group. In other words, the alternative hypothesis of the study, which stated that there is a significant effect of TBLT method on ESOL learners' academic writing achievement, was accepted.

4. CONCLUSION

There have been many studies conducted to prove the significant effect of TBLT on the writing ability of ESOL learners. In addition, Latchem et al. [29] also concluded that the task-based approach while using multimedia enhanced learners' achievement. The findings of this study of course corroborated the findings from those studies.

Furthermore, TBLT carries out more successful language learning on the part of the learners by actively involving them in doing tasks, which indeed result in their higher levels of motivation [30]. From this study, the researchers clearly observed that employing real world tasks, following task cycles, making use of cooperative learning, creating authentic data and different kinds of feedback provide the learners in the experimental group with an environment in which they were really interested in what they were writing. In fact, the significant difference between experimental and control group in this study was clear and the result was experimental group outperformed the control group which is 1.367 higher. This finding fulfilled the research objective one in this study. Then, according to the ANCOVA test result, the effect of TBLT within the group was significant. This result pursued the research objective two and confirmed the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

Therefore, the result of this study supported by Grainger et al [31] who said that environment is characteristically conducive towards the academic writing skill which has the potential of communication and motivation in class and can together with certain other factors, result in the enhancement of academic writing capacity of ESOL learners.

Based on the result, it can be concluded that the TBLT method has a significant effect on tertiary ESOL learners' academic writing achievement in Indonesia. In addition, this finding has the same conclusion with previous researchers who supported the implementation of TBLT method to writing skill. Therefore, this language teaching method is suggested to be used by the language teachers in Indonesia particularly and in any countries generally. Furthermore, this method also can be implemented to teach any skills in language teaching such as speaking, listening and reading and any different level of students' proficiencies and ages.

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