Universidad de Cuenca

Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

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Exploring the Influence of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on EFL Students' Productive Skills

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Autores:

Alex Patricio Molina Plaza

Gabriela Elizabeth Quito Procel

Director:

Gerardo Esteban Heras Urgilés

ORCID: 0000-0001-7330-3721

Cuenca, Ecuador

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Resumen

La presente síntesis de investigación examina la implementación del método de enseñanza de idiomas basado en tareas (TBLT) para enseñar inglés a estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en diferentes niveles educativos, enfocándose en las habilidades productivas. Durante este estudio de investigación, se revisaron 21 artículos que proporcionaron información de alta calidad sobre el uso del método TBLT en las aulas. Los resultados indican que su aplicación correcta tiene efectos positivos, tal y como se destaca en los estudios. Además, este método contribuyó a la fluidez, la pronunciación, el vocabulario, la gramática, la estructura de las oraciones, la organización del contenido y la motivación al final del período de prueba en los estudios. Tres estudios muestran limitaciones en la eficacia del método, debido a la falta de formación de los profesores para aplicarlo de manera eficiente, así como a la falta de recursos en algunas instituciones. En general, los resultados confirman la eficacia del método TBLT cuando se implementa correctamente y con tiempo suficiente para poder apreciar mejoras en los estudiantes de diferentes niveles educativos, en las habilidades de expresión oral y escrita.

Palabras clave del autor: métodos de enseñanza, lengua extranjera, expresión oral, expresión escrita

Abstract

The present research synthesis examines the implementation of the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method for teaching English to English as a foreign language (EFL) students at different educational levels, focusing on productive skills. During this research study, 21 articles that provided high-quality information on the use of TBLT in classrooms were reviewed. The results indicate that a correct application of the method brings positive effects, as highlighted in the studies. Furthermore, this method contributed to fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, content organization, and motivation at the end of the testing period in the studies. Three papers show limitations in the effectiveness of the method, due to the lack of teacher training in implementing TBLT effectively, as well as the lack of resources in some institutions. Overall, the results confirm the effectiveness of the TBLT method when implemented properly and with sufficient time to be able to notice improvements in students at different levels of education, in the skills of speaking and writing.

Author Keywords: teaching methods, foreign language, speaking expression, writing expression

Table of Contents

Resumen 1
Abstract 2
Table of Contents 3
List of Tables 5
Introduction 8
Chapter I 9
1. Description of the research 9
1.1 Background 9
1.2 Statement of the Problem 9
1.3 Rationale 10
1.4 Research question 10
1.5 Objectives 11
1.5.1 General Objective 11
1.5.2 Specific Objectives 11
Chapter ll 12
2. Theoretical Framework 12
2.1 What is TBLT? 12
2.2 Productive skills 12
2.3 Speaking 14
2.4 Writing 14
2.5 Educational levels 15
3. Literature Review 18
3.1 TBLT in Middle School English Language Classrooms 18
3.2 TBLT in High School English Language Classrooms 18
3.3 TBLT in College English Language Classrooms 19
Chapter IV 23
4. Methodology 23
5. Data Analysis and Results 24
5.1 Research Location 24

5.2 Research approach 25
5.3 Instruments and Data Collection Process 26
5.4 The Influence of TBLT on Speaking 27
5.5 The Influence of TBLT on Writing 28
Chapter VI 31
6. Conclusions and Recommendations 32
6.1 Conclusions 32
6.2 Recommendations 32
References 34

List of Tables

Table 1 Research Location……23
Table 2 Research Approach……24
Table 3 Instruments and Data Collection Process……25
Table 4 The Influence of TBLT on Speaking……26
Table 5 The Influence of TBLT on Writing……28

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the people who have been by my side throughout this challenging but enriching journey. To my mother, Gladys, my brother, Geovanny, and my grandmother, Filomena, for their constant support and unconditional love, which gave me the strength to keep going during the most difficult moments. Knowing they were there helped me stay strong. To my father, Enrique, who, despite the distance, always believed in me and encouraged me to stay on my path. To my best friend and thesis partner, Gabriela, thank you for motivating me to grow each day and for your support during hard times. Your presence was key to my determination not to give up. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to myself, for my perseverance, effort, and ability to keep moving forward despite the obstacles. Each challenge became an opportunity to learn, and today I value even more everything I have been able to accomplish.

Alex

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Introduction

In the constantly evolving area of EFL teaching, developing students' communicative competence has become the main goal, going beyond memorization or mechanical learning. Hence, TBLT has been considered a functional pedagogical method that emphasizes authentic communication and students' engagement through tasks that integrate and develop the four fundamental language skills, that is, reading, speaking, listening, and writing (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Therefore, the present research synthesis aims to report the different outcomes in the areas of speaking and writing skills at different educational levels after the implementation of the TBLT method.

Concerning communicative competence, all four skills are essential to achieve a high level of English proficiency to express ideas effectively (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014). However, it has been shown that reading and listening are the basis for the development of more advanced skills such as speaking and writing. Thus, this study delves deep into the influence of TBLT on EFL students' productive skills (speaking and writing) across different educational levels (i.e., middle school, high school, and college).

The study is divided into six different chapters. The first chapter outlines a description of the research where we describe the background, problem statement, rationale, research question, and the objectives of the study. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, while the third chapter discusses the literature review. The fourth chapter details the methodology used for the collection and analysis of 21 empirical studies. The fifth chapter presents the data analysis and results. Finally, in the sixth chapter, we include the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter I

1. Description of the research

1.1 Background

Competent language learning depends on the development of both receptive and productive skills. Masduqi et al. (2023) asserted that “integrating productive and receptive skills into the classroom is fundamental and beneficial for learning success as they play an important role in communication” (p. 83). Therefore, there should be a balance in the teaching of productive skills, writing and speaking, and receptive skills, listening and reading. These four skills have to be integrated into a lesson, taking into consideration the students’ proficiency level and needs, which is a challenging task for many teachers (Masduqi, 2016). However, listening and reading have received more attention than speaking and writing in many EFL contexts, which may be a disadvantage for many language learners (Masduqi et al., 2023).

Particularly, since the 1980s, communicative language teaching (CLT) has had an important role in English teaching (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Yoon (2004) stated that “in CLT, language learning emphasizes learning to communicate as opposed to learning a set of rules”(p.4). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), one salient feature attributed to the communicative method is the wide range in which it can be interpreted and applied. The authors credit this trait to the fact that several professionals, who apply the method, can understand it in different ways, and as a consequence, the implementation might be changed. The authors also emphasize meaningful communication through the use of real-world tasks, making learners use the language genuinely and engaging them in the language.

Furthermore, several studies underscore the capacity of TBLT to enhance learners’ oral or written language production. Sholeh (2020) suggested that “[With TBLT], students’ attention is based on problem-solving rather than on individual language systems…” (p.6). This author also suggests that TBLT may contribute to student motivation, a crucial element in language learning. In addition, Sholeh (2020) claimed that students will inevitably make mistakes during the learning process, and this is a normal part of the learning experience. He added that students need a comfortable learning environment, where they do not feel they are being judged, and are motivated to learn.

According to Ellis et al. (2020), TBLT encourages learners to utilize the target language to communicate in everyday situations they may encounter in their daily lives, rather than simply applying it in isolated grammatical exercises. In addition, Willis and Willis (2007) underscore the improvement in confidence when using the English language to negotiate meaning and solve problems that TBLT elicits, as it focuses on practical language and interaction. Another benefit that TBTL offers is that this method can create several opportunities for students to use the target language, as well as help them improve their autonomous and cooperative work, providing them with useful life skills (Nunan, 2003).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

TBLT gathered attention as a favorable method to language instruction during the last decade, mainly for productive skills (speaking and writing). However, despite accumulating evidence on its effectiveness, there remains a gap in research on the application of TBLT for the development of productive skills in English language classrooms across diverse educational levels (Ahmed, 2018). Therefore, this research synthesis aimed to address this gap by investigating how TBLT influences productive skills—speaking and writing—in English language classrooms, ranging from middle school to college, which were categories of analysis not addressed in the literature examined. By synthesizing findings from existing research studies regarding the influence of the method in middle school (Amina, 2018; Lestari, 2019; Lu et al., 2024; Nurhadi et al., 2024; Siyi & Patamadilok, 2021; Yin, 2020), high school (Albino, 2017; Aurelya et al., 2024; Fauzi, 2015; Kafipour et al., 2018; Martínez, 2023; NamazianDost et al., 2017; Nget et al., 2020; Saifudin & Setiawan, 2020), and college (Al-Tamimi et al., 2020; Darrashiri & Mazdayasna, 2021; Jiang, 2015; Nguyen & Luu, 2018; Panduwangi, 2021; Sabet et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2015;), this research synthesis sought to provide comprehensive insights into the efficacy and practical implications of TBLT for improving productive skills in English education at different levels.

1.3 Rational

A great number of studies have gathered information about the influence of TBLT on productive skills (see, for example, Amina,2018; Darrashiri & Mazdayasna, 2021; Kafipour et al., 2018). These different research studies found that TBLT had a positive impact on both speaking and writing skills among students in various contexts. The application of this method in English

classrooms evoked active language use and engagement, leading to the enhancement of proficiency in oral expression and writing abilities.

In this research synthesis, we focused on existing studies with an in-depth analysis of the effect of TBLT on productive skills at different educational levels. By analyzing and comparing results, we aimed to address the lack of understanding regarding the effectiveness of TBLT in promoting oral and written proficiency among EFL learners. Through a comprehensive review of different articles, this synthesis provides information concerning the possible benefits and challenges of implementing TBLT in various educational contexts at different ages, thus leading future research to significantly improve and inform educational practices while raising awareness.

1.4 Research question

The following research question guides the present research synthesis.

1. What are the effects of the implementation of TBLT on EFL students' productive skills across educational levels?

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 General Objective

To analyze the effects of TBLT on EFL students' productive skills across educational levels.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- To determine the impact of TBLT on writing skills in diverse educational settings.
- To determine the impact of TBLT on speaking skills in diverse educational settings.

Chapter II

2. Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework will define the key concepts related to the implementation of TBLT to develop productive skills at different educational levels. TBLT is a method within communicative language teaching that focuses on engaging learners in meaningful tasks to enhance language learning; therefore, this method helps learners to communicate in everyday activities. Furthermore, to achieve full communication, students must develop the 4 basic skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In this theoretical framework, we will focus on the productive skills (writing and speaking), which require active use of language, either written or oral. In addition, emphasis will be placed on the impact of TBLT at different educational levels, focusing specifically on middle school, high school, and college.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) pointed out that there are differences between second and foreign language learning. The first one refers to learning another language in a context (country, city, or region) where the target language is widely spoken outside the classroom, and it is the official or most commonly used language in that context, for example, learning English in Australia. Foreign language learning, on the other hand, takes place in a setting where the target language is not used by most people outside the classroom, for example, learning English in Ecuador. In this research synthesis, studies that took place in EFL settings were analized; however, the term 'second language' is commonly used to refer to an additional language besides the first, regardless of the context in which it is learned (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Thus, in this work, sometimes we use ESL as a generic term.

2.1 What is TBLT?

TBLT refers to a method of language instruction in which the learning process is carried out through tasks that are the central unit of planning and the lesson (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The authors also highlighted that this method uses meaningful, real-world tasks that enable learners to perform and use the target language in practical contexts or situations that they might encounter in their daily lives, such as sending an e-mail or ordering food in a restaurant. As mentioned by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), "TBLT is another example of the 'strong version' of the communicative approach, where language is acquired through use." (p.193). This refers to the idea that students learn the language they need to complete the task. Through the

application of TBLT, learners simultaneously think and use the language, which facilitates the cognitive and interactive (competence and performance) aspects of language learning (Stein, 2018). Therefore, for this method, teachers take on the role of facilitators, guides, and promoters of learning and seek to create opportunities to use the language and provide enough exposure for language acquisition, rather than just achieving a set of goals (Willis & Willis, 2007).

TBLT has been given various names, depending on how it is implemented, emphasized, and understood (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Task-based instruction (TBI) is an alternative term commonly used for this method, which, as the name indicates, emphasizes the instructional focus on tasks that require the use of language in real-life contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The authors point out that TBI and TBLT are used interchangeably to refer to task-based teaching with a communicative purpose. According to Samuda and Bygate (2008), another denomination that has been used in the literature is task-supported language teaching (TSLT), where the tasks are part of a pedagogical framework of traditional or grammar-based teaching. As mentioned above, the term we use in this study is task-based language teaching.

TBLT consists of three main stages: a pre-task, a task, and a post-task, which take place during one or more lessons, making students the center of the teaching-learning process (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). The pre-task refers to introducing the task to the students and preparing them to complete it. This means that this stage serves to familiarize the learners with the language to be used, i.e., structures or vocabulary, providing them with a basis for the next stage (Willis, 1996). Littlewood (2004) asserted that this phase usually involves activities to engage the students, such as brainstorming or presenting a model, helping the learners to concentrate on the target content and language.

Ellis (2003) defined “task” as activities that engage learners in meaningful communication for a specific purpose, such as sharing experiences with peers or simply interacting with them. In addition, Nunan (2004) stated that the tasks implemented by each teacher should allow learners to use both productive and receptive skills in a way that encourages authentic language use.

As stated by Willis and Willis (2007), the post-task stage involves different activities that encourage all students to analyze the target language they recently used. Generally, this type of analysis is given with short feedback sessions or linguistic analysis. Therefore, this analysis is a fundamental part of students’ learning; they will reinforce their understanding and correct errors that occur during the process. Khademi et al. (2017) said that “post-task activities have a significant effect on learners' language proficiency, their reading achievements, and their

motivation to participate in classroom tasks" (p.1). Ellis (2003) emphasizes that post-task activities may include group discussions, error correction exercises, or repetition tasks; the mentioned activities have a positive effect on students since they can reinforce their knowledge and achieve higher retention of the target language.

2.2 Productive skills

When people start learning a second language, they have to learn both receptive and productive skills in order to develop their communicative competence (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014). These authors claimed that receptive skills, which include listening and reading, are the foundation of productive skills (writing and speaking). The latter are also called active skills, which refer to generating information produced by the language user, either through speaking or writing. Without the support of receptive skills, productive skills are not possible to develop. Typically, while learning a second language, receptive skills are acquired first, laying the foundation for the later development of productive skills. Therefore, a balanced language learning process involves the continuous integration of both receptive and productive skills. In other words, "a productive skill is the term for speaking and writing skills in which students have to produce the language themselves" (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014, p.2).

Speaking and writing are a fundamental part of students' learning process to achieve effective communication in their environment. Thus, students will have a greater facility to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions clearly and consistently in the target language (Harmer, 2014). According to Richards (2015), the most difficult aspects of learning a second language is speaking and writing, since these skills require much more than just learning grammatical rules in isolation. Students must apply these grammatical rules in real contexts. Consequently, Harmer (2014) stated that most learners who become actively involved in language production tend to develop a higher level of linguistic competence and communicative fluency than learners who do not engage in active language production.

2.3 Speaking

Bailey (2003) asserted that speaking is a productive aural/oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. As mentioned by Goh and Burns (2012), conceptualization, formulation, and articulation are part of the processes a learner has to go through to become a second language speaker. In addition, becoming fluent and coherent is

considered the main indicator of communicative competence in the target language, as it allows students not only to demonstrate grammatical and structural knowledge but also the ability to apply that knowledge in authentic communicative situations. Therefore, Derwing and Munro (2015) emphasized that pronunciation, fluency, and the use of appropriate discourse strategies are factors that directly influence the development of speaking skills, and that being all connected, they allow students to communicate their ideas in different contexts effectively.

In the TBLT method of teaching English as a foreign language, the different tasks implemented are designed to enable students to use the language effectively and interactively, as well as to achieve greater fluency and accuracy in using the language (Zambrano, 2019). Ellis (2003) highlighted the great importance of student interaction in developing speaking skills. Therefore, by being exposed to this interaction, learners can practice in real contexts and receive immediate feedback, which is fundamental to their progress in second language learning. Consequently, Skehan (2018) stressed that different levels of complexity of the tasks used in TBLT can affect both positively and negatively on learners' performance. Therefore, it is critical and of utmost importance to carefully develop the tasks to balance the complexity, fluency, and accuracy of the activities to develop the speaking skills effectively for learners.

2.4 Writing

Writing is a key productive skill in language learning, as it primarily requires learners to produce coherent and consistent texts and to communicate their ideas effectively (Harmer, 2004). Unlike receptive skills, such as reading and listening, writing requires learners to develop the ability to actively formulate different sentences and to use grammar and vocabulary logically (Harmer, 2004). This process is cognitively demanding, as writers must plan, draft, revise, and edit their work to ensure accurate and fluent communication (Hyland, 2019). Grabe and Kaplan (2014) indicated that regular writing practice helps students increase their mastery of linguistic structures that will be useful in academic and professional settings. Writing also promotes personalized expression, enabling students to convey complex ideas and arguments, a skill that is especially valuable in higher education and formal contexts (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

2.5 Educational levels

Educational levels refer to the gradual stages of formal instruction, divided into primary, secondary, and post-secondary, which are adapted to a specific age group and needs (Alvarez et al., 2003). In the words of Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2007), the educational system is

composed of successive stages to assist the progress of students, providing them with the required knowledge and fundamental skills for the next academic or professional phases. In many countries, secondary education is divided into lower secondary, often known as middle school, and upper secondary, referred to as high school (Schneider, 2013). This phase of instruction has become very important because “secondary education…prepares young people for productive adulthood” (Alvarez et al., 2003, p.33). Meanwhile, post-secondary education, which includes college and university, provides more specialized knowledge to learners to prepare them for career paths and further personal development (Altbach et al., 2009).

Middle school refers to the transitional stage between elementary and high school, covering grades 6 to 8, where the main objective is to foster academic development as well as personal growth (Rheaume et al., 2019). This stage presents several significant changes in students' cognitive and social relationships, which may represent challenges for teachers, such as disruptive behavior or difficulty in building rapport (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). For this reason, the latter authors also stated that educators should properly address the students’ needs since they might face greater challenges regarding academic demands and social dynamics. Furthermore, middle school is a crucial phase in early adolescence because it not only introduces more advanced content for the next educational stage, high school, but also contributes to their social-emotional development (Roeser et al., 1998).

High school, which typically encompasses grades 9-12, is an important stage in students' academic and personal development (Nunan, 2004). This transition from middle school to high school can involve notable changes, such as an increased academic workload, the first signs of independence by students, and a special emphasis on preparing students for college admission or a professional life outside of education (Pinter, 2017). Therefore, this transition usually becomes a challenge for students since they have to adapt to different academic standards and demands (Littlewood, 2004). In high school, EFL students encounter more structured lessons aimed at building fundamental language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and basic writing, which serve as essential components for future academic success (Ellis, 2003). In addition, high school education gives special importance to both individual and group learning, where students are involved in group discussions, presentations, and writing, which form a fundamental part of their development of different language and communication skills (Bygate, 2001). Therefore, these skills are not only useful for students to feel prepared for their university stage but also to feel able to express their ideas clearly and engage in conversation in academic or social contexts (Bravo Acosta, 2024).

When we talk about college education, it refers to a more developed stage of knowledge, where the ideal is to have a greater mastery of the different academic disciplines chosen by each student (Nunan, 2004). The author also stated that at this stage, more emphasis is placed on formal annotation, exploration, and oral presentations. In addition, more advanced learners engage in higher-level conditioning and more complex textbooks, but most importantly, develop the ability to express their ideas with ease and coherence, either in writing or orally (Van den Branden, 2006). The move from high school to college primarily involves becoming more sophisticated in the use of language by honing introductory skills, not just learning them (Littlewood, 2004).

In the Ecuadorian educational system, secondary education is divided into “Educación Básica Superior” and “Bachillerato.” Therefore, middle school is approximately equivalent to the Ecuadorian sublevel called “Básica Superior”, which corresponds to the lower secondary years of education (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020). The last three years of secondary education are a sublevel called “Bachillerato General Unificado” (UNESCO et al., 2021). This sublevel is approximately comparable to upper secondary education, that is, high school. This stage, high school, prepares students for higher education. As is in most international contexts, colleges, universities, and certain institutes in Ecuador correspond to higher education, which includes undergraduate programs (third level) and postgraduate programs (fourth level) (UNESCO et al., 2021). This study focuses on middle school, high school, and undergraduate higher education students.

Chapter III

3. Literature Review

Several studies have explored the implementation of TBLT across different English language classrooms. These studies have taken place in different contexts and have used various research approaches. In this section, we present an overview of previous investigations that have used TBLT at the educational levels mentioned to measure and develop learners' productive skills.

3.1 TBLT in Middle School English Language Classrooms

Yin (2020) measured the development of English students' speaking skills using TBLT with 112 eighth graders in China. The participants were equally divided into a control group, using traditional teaching methods, and an experimental group, where TBLT was implemented. Moreover, the study used phonetic symbols to measure learners' correct pronunciation and considered the number of sentences produced in a fixed amount of time to measure fluency. The results revealed that the experimental group was able to communicate and discuss topics in the target language better than the students in the control group. Thus, in the experimental group, the students improved their fluency, speaking with fewer pauses, enhanced their pronunciation, and acquired more vocabulary.

Similarly, the study conducted by Lu et al. (2024) in China with 101 seventh graders, divided into an experimental and a comparison group, evidenced an overall improvement in the oral skills of the experimental group. Although the comparison group, which used the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) method, showed a little more improvement in accuracy, the experimental group presented a greater enhancement in fluency and complexity. Thus, the students were able to speak smoothly and use advanced vocabulary to express their ideas. Therefore, this research, which lasted 15 weeks with 3 sessions per week, demonstrated that the comparison group could stand out in grammar due to the form-focused emphasis of the method, while the group that used TBLT was more engaged in the tasks interactively, leading to greater improvements in the mentioned areas.

Siyi & Patamadilok (2021) reported, based on a study on teaching in 3 different EFL schools in China over one month, that the implementation of TBLT improved listening comprehension and speaking skills. In the case of the first school, the teacher used the different teaching materials

correctly and used the target language more, which resulted in more opportunities for students to use the language and an improvement in their speaking skills. On the other hand, schools 2 and 3 showed minimal improvement after the incorrect application of TBLT. Students were easily distracted, resulting in incomplete assignments or incorrect answers. Furthermore, the limited use of the target language, the teachers' limited ability to create and implement assignments, as well as the shortage of supporting materials and devices, contributed to students' failure to use the target language more frequently and achieve significant improvement.

Concerning writing skills, the study developed by Saifudin and Setiawan (2020) sought to improve descriptive writing skills in seventh graders in Indonesia through the application of TBLT. It was found that students effectively understood what descriptive writing was about and its objective, as well as the use of generic structures. However, learners presented many difficulties because of the limited time, which led them to make several mistakes in grammar and punctuation, in addition to having a poor use of vocabulary. Furthermore, Amina (2018) also reported an improvement in students' writing skills by using the TBLT method, without leaving aside the challenges that arose for teachers. The participants were 80 fourth-grade learners. The study revealed positive outcomes such as the use of new vocabulary, structured sentences, and better writing activities. However, there were still many grammatical errors, and learners did not fully understand what the task required. Moreover, one of the main problems was the excessive teachers' use of Arabic in the classroom, which exponentially limited learners' use of English.

Expanding on the previous ideas, a study developed by Lestari (2019) aimed to improve students' writing skills in descriptive texts outlining significant outcomes. This research, which was conducted in Indonesia with 38 seventh-grade students, measured aspects such as content, vocabulary, organization, grammar, and mechanics. The study demonstrated an improvement in students' writing skills since they became better at providing relevant, detailed information, topic-specific vocabulary usage, and text organization. However, some students used dictionaries to complete the tasks, which slowed the process and led to vocabulary limitations, and they also struggled to organize the text coherently and cohesively.

3.2 TBLT in High School English Language Classrooms

Nget et al. (2020) demonstrated the effectiveness of TBLT in promoting students' speaking skills. The study was conducted in Cambodia with 78 ninth-grade students divided into an experimental and a control group, during an academic year. The study measured students' fluency, grammar,

and pronunciation. At the beginning of the study, the results of the pre-test in the control and experimental groups were similar, but the post-test showed a small improvement in the experimental group in the mentioned aspects, with a significant enhancement of vocabulary.

Furthermore, a research carried out in Colombia by Martinez Cabezas (2023) involved 22 tenth-grade students, who participated in 6 workshops conducted under the TBLT method. The investigation implemented the 3 stages of TBLT in each workshop, which focused on presentation, role-playing, and planning. As a result of the implementation of TBLT, the findings revealed that students gained confidence to speak in English, and got better scores in fluency, pronunciation, and grammar; they also increased their vocabulary. Since this method offered a great amount of exposure to the target language, the use of the mother tongue decreased, allowing students to use English more effectively.

In Indonesia, Nurhadi et al. (2024) conducted a study on the application of TBLT for improving the oral proficiency of tenth-grade students in a secondary school. By the implementation analysis of the data, TBLT was found to positively affect students, improving their vocabulary, communication, and fluency. In addition, these tasks had an interactive component, which reinforced learner confidence, reduced anxiety, and encouraged peer learning. Similarly, Albino (2017) investigated the impact of TBLT on speech fluency in 40 ninth-grade students in Angola by engaging them in picture description tasks during a structured eight-week intervention. Thus, the results indicated significant improvements in fluency and grammatical accuracy. In addition, all learners were encouraged to use the target language in class and were given real tasks and practical, real-world applications for what they had worked on.

Concerning writing skills, NamazianDost et al. (2017) found positive results in their study. They worked with 80 Iranian high school students who were divided into control and experimental groups; the latter learned English grammar using TBLT during 12 weeks. The authors highlighted the effectiveness of TBLT in making learning enjoyable and motivating students in the experimental group. They also reported substantial improvement in grammar performance. Likewise, Kafipour et al. (2018) demonstrated the effectiveness of the application of TBLT in improving the writing ability of 69 Iranian EFL learners who were placed randomly into a control and an experimental group in which TBLT method was used with the experimental group. Scores showed significant progress in terms of content, organization, use of vocabulary, and use of language in the experimental group. Moreover, students in this group felt active and willing to

participate in class, improving vocabulary command in terms of lexical phrases, collocations, and linguistic forms.

Further exploring this topic, Fauzi (2015) found that tenth-grade students in an experimental group improved their writing skills after the implementation of TBLT during an academic year. In this research, 85 Indonesian tenth-grade students were divided into experimental and control groups. It was found that the use of the TBLT method evoked better results in the experimental group. Moreover, students taught with the TBLT method increased their scores by one category in their writing ability, while the control group learners remained the same. Moreover, Aurelya et al. (2024) demonstrated that TBLT can be used to improve EFL learners' writing skills. This research was a qualitative study conducted in a high school in Indonesia, and the participants were nine students. The results revealed that TBLT has contributed to the enhancement of different areas, such as grammar, vocabulary, and overall writing fluency of the students. However, the authors found some challenges that students face, such as vocabulary knowledge, sentence structure, or difficulty in using everyday English, which could add confusion to the learning experiences. Consequently, although problems arose with this method, TBLT contributed to better interactive dynamics of the learning environment among students, which increased their basic language ability and significantly contributed to improving students' writing (Aurelya et al., 2024).

3.3 TBLT in College English Language Classrooms

Regarding the effects of TBLT on college students' speaking skills, Tang et al. (2015) carried out a research study in Taiwan for 15 weeks with 76 intermediate EFL learners. The scores revealed that students significantly improved their fluency since the tests measured various pronunciation aspects such as intonation, stress, and mid-clause pauses. Besides, students also enhanced lexical sophistication and syntactic complexity. Similarly, the research developed in Indonesia by Panduwangi (2021) with 60 college participants, divided into an experimental and a control group, demonstrated the improvement of learners' speaking abilities. The results revealed that there was an enhancement within the experimental group in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency, which are important aspects that contribute to students' speaking skills. In addition, those students demonstrated a better attitude towards the target language and gained more confidence in speaking English. A study developed by Al-Tamimi et al., (2020), where TBLT was used to enhance students' oral skills, took place in Yemen. Twenty first-year university students were the participants. In the investigation, the students received classes for 12 weeks, with three hours per

week. The results indicated a clear improvement in the students' overall speaking skills after receiving practice through the TBLT activities.

In the case of writing skills, the research carried out by Darrashiri and Mazdayasna (2021) in Iran demonstrated that TBLT was effective in enhancing some features of the writing skills. The participants of the study were 25 undergraduate students who were evaluated in different aspects such as grammar, diction, organization, content, mechanics, cohesion, and coherence. After this evaluation, it was demonstrated that all the students improved in the previously mentioned aspects and had positive attitudes towards TBLT. Similarly, the study done in Iran by Sabet et al. (2014), with 68 university students divided into a control group (36) and an experimental group (32), revealed that the latter group had better outcomes in their writing skills and motivation. Both groups sought to enhance their skills in writing research abstracts, but the control group received instruction with the Presentation, Practice, and Production method (PPP) and the experimental group with the TBLT method. The results showed that the experimental group incorporated in a better manner the 5 essential moves for an abstract: introduction, purpose, method, result, and conclusion. Therefore, the scores indicated that this group outperformed the control group in writing quality, improving coherence and cohesion. Also, the experimental students were more motivated, and this influenced their academic performance.

Moreover, a study developed by Nguyen and Luu (2018) in Vietnam, which involved 40 university students, predominantly women, showed that TBLT positively affected students' writing skills. The participants were divided equally into a control group and an experimental group, in which TBLT was implemented. Through the data collected, it could be seen an enhancement in the experimental group within five components, including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Likewise, the study by Jiang (2015) found that students improved certain features of their writing. The research involved 112 Chinese students, divided into a control group (58 students) and an experimental group (54 students). The latter group, which was taught with the TBLT method, got higher scores in the post-test, indicating the effectiveness of the method in improving writing skills, particularly the content and organization aspect, while the control group just improved in content. However, the students of the experimental group struggled with the limited time, causing them to make spelling and grammar mistakes.

Chapter IV

4. Methodology

This study is a research synthesis, which refers to “a broad overarching term to describe various approaches to combining, integrating, and synthesizing research findings'' (Schick-Makaroff et al., 2016, p.1). This work has as its main objective to analyze the influence of TBLT on EFL learners' productive skills (speaking and writing) at different educational levels. Therefore, to develop this work, different digital databases were analyzed. They include *Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, and ERIC,* as well as the following journals*: JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEEA) Journal, Journal of Applied Studies in Language, Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Translation studies, Atlantis Press*. Some key terms and combinations of terms were used to choose the most useful sources: “TBLT in middle school,” “TBLT in High School,” “TBLT in college.”

This research synthesis included the analysis of 21 scientific papers considering the following inclusion criteria for their eligibility in relation to TBLT and its influence on productive skills in middle school, high school, and college.

1. Scientific papers published after 2010.

2. Papers based on qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches.

3. Scientific papers analyzing the effectiveness of TBLT for the enhancement of productive skills (speaking and writing) in different levels of education, focusing on the extent of improvement and the encountered outcomes.

All scientific papers that did not fulfill the presented criteria were not considered for this research synthesis. The analysis of the data was based on the qualitative generation of themes and/or categories that emerged as the process took place.

Chapter V

5. Data Analysis and Results

This chapter provides an analysis of the 21 articles used in this research synthesis. The research question that guided this study was the following: What are the effects of the implementation of TBLT on EFL students' productive skills across educational levels? This section is divided into the following categories: Research location, research approach, instruments and data collection process, the influence of TBLT on speaking, and the influence of TBLT on writing.

5.1 Research Location

Table 1

Research Location

Location	Author/ Year	N	%
Africa	Albino (2017), Amina (2018)	2	10%
Asia	Al-Tamimi et al. (2020); Aurelya et al. (2024); Darrashiri & Mazdayasna (2021); Fauzi (2015); Jiang (2015); Kafipour et al. (2018); Lestari (2019); Lu et al. (2024); NamazianDost et al. (2017); Nget et al. (2020); Nguyen & Luu (2018); Nurhadi et al. (2024); Panduwangi (2021); Sabet et al. (2014); Saifudin & Setiawan (2020); Siyi & Patamadilok (2021); Tang et al. (2015); Yin (2020)	18	86%
America	Martínez Cabezas (2023)	1	4%
Total		21	100%

Table 1 presents the geographic distribution of the 21 reviewed studies, illustrating variations among the continents of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. It can be noted that Asia has the largest proportion, comprising 86% of the studies, demonstrating a predominant focus on TBLT in this region. In this region, various studies were conducted at different educational levels, namely, middle school, high school, and college, and in several countries, including Yemen, Indonesia, Iran, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Among these, the majority of the investigations were carried out in Indonesia, China, and Iran, which are therefore the most predominantly represented. In contrast, Africa represents 10% of the studies, covering high school and middle school in the countries of Angola and Algeria. The Americas are minimally represented, with only 4%; this study focused on high school students in Colombia. This distribution emphasizes the global scope of TBLT research, with a marked concentration in Asian contexts. The findings highlight the diverse applications of TBLT across different regions, though with a notable emphasis in Asian educational settings.

5.2 Research approach

Table 2

Research Approach

Approach	Author/ Year	N	%
Quantitative	Fauzi (2015); Jiang (2015); Kafipour et al. (2018); Lu et al. (2024); NamazianDost et al. (2017); Nguyen & Luu (2018); Panduwangi (2021); Sabet et al. (2014); Yin (2020)	9	43%
Qualitative	Albino (2017); Aurelya et al. (2024); Nurhadi et al. (2024); Saifudin & Setiawan (2020); Siyi & Patamadilok (2021)	5	24%
Mixed methods	Al-Tamimi et al. (2020); Amina (2018); Darrashiri & Mazdayasna (2021); Lestari (2019), Martínez Cabezas (2023); Nget et al. (2020); Tang et al.(2015)	7	33%
Total		21	100%

Table 2 shows an arrangement of the diverse research approaches used in the 21 studies, reflecting a difference between quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Notably, there is a predominance in the percentage of quantitative studies, with 43%. In these studies, improvements were demonstrated through percentages, average scores, and mean scores within categories, which were compared with the control group in most of the studies. Moreover, the second prominent percentage is 33%, which belongs to the mixed-methods approach. This method involves using numbers to convey the results, as well as qualitative data such as beliefs or attitudes. The qualitative approach was used by 24% of the works analyzed, which means that there is a focus on gathering participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. This distribution highlights the varied ways researchers have investigated TBLT, depending on their focus and context, ensuring a deep understanding of its impact.

5.3 Instruments and Data Collection Process

Table 3

Instruments and Data Collection Process

Instruments	Author/ Year	N	%
Pre-test and Post-test	Fauzi (2015); Jiang (2015); Kafipour et al. (2018); Lu et al. (2024); NamazianDost et al. (2017); Nget et al. (2020); Nguyen & Luu (2018); Panduwangi (2021); Sabet et al. (2014)	9	43%
Observation and Interviews	Aurelya et al. (2024); Nurhadi et al. (2024); Saifudin & Setiawan (2020); Siyi & Patamadilok (2021)	4	19%
Mixed Instruments	Albino (2017); Al-Tamimi et al. (2020); Amina (2018); Darrashiri & Mazdayasna (2021); Lestari (2019); Martínez Cabezas (2023); Tang et al. (2015); Yin (2020)	8	38%

Total	21	100 %

Table 3 illustrates the principal tools used throughout the 21 selected studies to collect data. The first category contains the studies that implemented pre- and post-tests, which composed 43% of the sample. These instruments evaluated the impact of interventions and measured changes through the study. Observations, along with interviews, constitute the second category, representing 19% of the studies. These tools served as a means to perceive learners' progress and perspectives on the students' learning process during the instruction. Moreover, 38% belongs to the integration of various research instruments to obtain a holistic investigation into the research topic. This category involves different combinations of instruments such as pre- and post-tests, alongside observations, interviews, audio recordings, and questionnaires.

5.4 The Influence of TBLT on Speaking

Table 4

The Influence of TBLT on Speaking

Influence	Educational level	Author/ Year	Aspects	N	%
Positive	Middle School	Lu et al. (2024); Nurhadi et al. (2024); Yin (2020)	Higher post-test scores. Improvement in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, complexity, and confidence	9	90%
	High School	Albino (2017); Martínez Cabezas (2023); Nget et al. (2020)	Higher post-test scores. Improvement in fluency, accuracy, use of fillers, motivation, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction, and grammar		
	College	Al-Tamimi et al. (2020); Panduwangi	Higher post-test scores.		

		(2021); Tang et al. (2015)	Improvement in lexicon-grammatical structures, organization, fluency, content, vocabulary, motivation, and self-confidence.		
Neutral	Middle School	Siyi & Patamadilok (2021)	No significant improvement in two of three classrooms. Poor vocabulary, incorrect tense, and other grammatical mistakes.	1	10%
Negative				0	0%
Total				10	100 %

Table 4 depicts the influence of TBLT on speaking skills across different levels of education, as reported in 10 of the selected studies. Notably, the table reveals that 90% of the studies found a positive influence of TBLT on students' speaking skills. All these articles that reported an improvement have considered aspects such as fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Seven studies, Albino (2017); Al-Tamimi et al. (2020); Lu et al. (2024); Martínez Cabezas (2023); Nurhadi et al. (2024); Panduwangi (2021); and Yin (2020), reported a great enhancement in speaking skills with higher scores on the post-tests. As in the case of Panduwangi (2021), the study demonstrated students' progression through a significant difference in the percentage of improvement, reporting an enhancement from 14% to 21% in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Nevertheless, two of the studies (Nget et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2015) demonstrated a minimal improvement, less than a point in some areas, such as accuracy. Nget et al. (2020) stated that learners in the experimental group only had a score 0.5 higher compared to the control group in the post-test. In order to demonstrate the influence of TBLT, the scores of the post-tests were compared with the learners' pre-tests and the control groups' scores in most of the studies that used these instruments.

Moreover, the aspects of speaking that showed improvements vary according to the educational level; that is, college students were able to use more complex grammatical structures than the participants from other levels. Also, high school students started to use fillers and had more interaction in the target language, while middle school students improved on basic structures and

vocabulary. Furthermore, it was reported that middle school students struggled with the time to accomplish the tasks. Moreover, through the use of questionnaires, interviews, and observation, it was revealed that in all the different levels, learners' motivation increased. Therefore, the classes were more engaging and dynamic, facilitating the use of the target language among students.

Furthermore, it can be observed that 10% of the sample reflects a neutral influence, since the majority of the participants did not demonstrate an improvement with the implementation of this method. Siyi and Patamadilok (2021) reported that two of the three classes involved in the study did not show any improvement in their speaking ability. Nevertheless, the authors of the study endorsed TBLT and advocated that the limited positive outcomes may be attributed to a suboptimal implementation of this method during the lessons. Overall, the analysis underscores the positive influence of TBLT on students' speaking skills, alongside a minor number of investigations that obtained neutral results, highlighting a possible faulty implementation of TBLT.

5.5 The Influence of TBLT on Writing

Table 5

The Influence of TBLT on Writing

Influence	Educational level	Author/ Year	Aspects	N	%
Positive	Middle School	Lestari (2019)	Higher post-test scores. Improvement in generating ideas, vocabulary, organization, grammar, confidence, and motivation.	9	82%
	High School	Aurelya et al. (2024); Fauzi (2015); NamazianDost et al. (2017)	Higher post-test scores. Improvements in grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, organization, and motivation.		

	College	Darrashiri & Mazdayasna (2021); Jiang (2015); Kafipour et al. (2018); Nguyen & Luu (2018); Sabet et al. (2014)	Higher post-test scores. Improvement in vocabulary, sentence mechanics, content, organization, grammar, language usage, and motivation.		
Neutral	Middle School	Amina (2018)	No significant improvements in writing skills, but TBLT helped depending on their level and the type of task.	2	18%
	High School	Saifudin & Setiawan (2020)	Need improvement in style, grammar, vocabulary, organization, capitalization, tense, and vocabulary.		
Negative				0	0%
Total				11	100 %

Table 5 shows the influence of TBLT on writing skills at distinct educational levels, focusing on 11 of the 21 studies analyzed. Specifically, the table shows that 82% of the studies reported a positive impact across the three educational levels; the studies considered aspects such as the correct use of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and students' motivation as positive impacts. Nine studies, such as Aurelya et al. (2024); Darrashiri & Mazdayasna (2021); Fauzi (2015); Jiang (2015); Kafipour et al. (2018); Lestari (2019); NamazianDost et al. (2017); Nguyen & Luu (2018), and Sabet et. al. (2014), reported a great improvement in writing skills, demonstrating better organization of students' works, broader vocabulary, sentence mechanics, and content. For instance, Lestari (2019) found that at the beginning of the study, just 18.4% of the students reached the minimum criterion, but after the post-test, 73.7% of students reached the minimum criterion, which demonstrated a big difference in most of the students' skills. However, the studies of Aurelya et al. (2024), (Jiang 2015), and NamazianDost et al. (2017) mentioned that despite the

significant improvement that students showed, they also experienced difficulty during the post-tests and tended to make spelling and grammar mistakes due to the limited time.

Although these positive results vary depending on the educational level, some aspects are consistent across the three different levels. For instance, through the application of TBLT, students in the experimental group obtained better grades in the post-test compared to those in the control group. Furthermore, middle school learners, in particular, struggled with the limited time available to complete the writing tasks, leading them to make mistakes in the process. College students also experienced time-related difficulties, but to a lesser degree.

In general, the papers suggest that TBLT is an effective method for improving writing skills, regardless of the student's initial English proficiency. Nonetheless, the studies of Amina (2018) and Saifudin and Setiawan (2020), representing 18% of the articles analyzed, showed neutral results. In these studies, TBLT was shown as a method that did not have a major impact on the participants' writing skills, but it did not diminish the English proficiency they already possessed. The results supported this conclusion, since, at the end of the experimental period, it could be observed that the students had no improvement in their writing skills, e.g., style, grammar, and vocabulary. This neutral outcome, as demonstrated in the mentioned studies, is due to the lack of teacher training in implementing TBLT effectively, according to the authors. However, the results of the other articles reviewed show the effectiveness of this method in students of different ages if it is applied correctly, using material and techniques according to the students' level.

Chapter VI

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis sought to analyze the influence of implementing the TBLT method on EFL students' productive skills, that is, speaking and writing skills, across different educational levels. Most of the findings with respect to speaking skills revealed that the TBLT method helped students enhance several aspects, such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, content organization, and motivation. This is supported by nine studies that demonstrated that students achieved higher scores on the post-tests, reflecting a considerable or slight improvement within categories stated in the research. Some of these works illustrated this positive influence through interviews and observations instead of scores, but they still underscore the students' progress effectively. Nevertheless, one of the studies reported a neutral influence on students' speaking skills, since there was no improvement in the majority of the participants. However, the authors of the research study mentioned the lack of improvement was due to poor implementation of the method by the teacher.

In the same way, regarding writing skills, it was shown that the TBLT method had a positive impact on students. Accordingly, nine of the different studies showed positive results in vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and motivation. These findings were supported through the application of pre- and post-tests in both the control and experimental groups, with the experimental group achieving higher scores and demonstrating enhanced overall writing quality. Even so, two of the studies reported a neutral impact on the students' learning, since there was no significant improvement in the students. This limited impact appears to be due to the same issue observed with speaking skills, referring to the incorrect application of the method.

Furthermore, some of the reviewed articles outlined that both teachers and students expressed a positive attitude towards the mentioned teaching method. This was noticeable through questionnaires or interviews, where they reported feeling motivated and engaged in class. Moreover, the observation of the classes evidenced better participation, interaction among students in the target language, and improved outcomes. In addition, the improvement reported in the studies varied depending on the level of education since middle school, high school, and college focused on different structures and topics. In particular, middle school students struggled

with the limited time to complete the tasks, making the process a little more difficult than in high school or college.

6.2 Recommendations

Although the findings of the selected articles for this research synthesis mostly revealed positive results, further research is needed to address existing gaps. Subsequent investigations should explore the implementation of the TBLT method in different geographical areas to gain a deeper insight into how the method functions across diverse learner populations. Since most of the research available was carried out in Asia, researchers could conduct empirical investigations in other parts of the world, such as Ecuador and Latin America. Similarly, while a great number of academic works primarily focus on high school and college, there is limited evidence of TBLT instruction in middle school. Another important area for examination is how implementation factors, such as teacher training, class size, and instructional time, influence the success of TBLT. This could help explain the variability in outcomes, contributing to the implementation of the method according to the classroom context and environment. Addressing these recommendations may strengthen the evidence for TBLT and support its application in EFL teaching worldwide.

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