

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PROMOTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ABILITY OF CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PROMOTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ABILITY OF CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

Bo Ju

Under the Supervision of Dr. Dong Isbister

With the rapid development of international communication of modern society, English, as an important tool in international communication, has been playing a more and more important role in college education in China since the last two decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the introduction of the TBLT, more and more college teachers in China have done related research and implementation in order to improve students' English ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking. By comparative study, this paper uses detailed quantitative data analysis to explore whether college students can improve their English language ability with the implementation of the TBLT on Chinese college students. The result shows that TBLT improves Chinese college students' English reading and writing proficiency.

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## Chapter I Introduction

Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has become a very popular teaching method in China. Generally, people believe that TBLT could give language learners strong motivation focused on specific tasks to conduct independent exploration, interactive and cooperative study. The core part of the TBLT is to help language learners obtain the ability to use language in the task with practical purpose. (-e.g. the communicative tasks used in language teaching).

Considered as an effective method of college English teaching reform, TBLT has been implemented in China's English classroom teaching. It has also been under a heated debate. Some scholars and teachers question if TBLT can actually promote college students' English learning, especially in reading and writing. By comparing the traditional instructor-centered teaching method and the task based language teaching method, this paper will explore if the TBLT method can promote college sophomores' English proficiency in reading and writing.

This paragraph still reads weak in the logical development of ideas. Try to fill in some gaps if possible. Once again, please try to work on your syntax and find a native speaker with a minimum college degree in English to help you edit your paper.

I mentioned earlier that you should avoid using the passive voice if possible, but you made minimal changes in your revision throughout the paper. Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions.

## **Statement of the Problem**

When instructors use the TBLT method and traditional instructor-centered approaches, what will be the difference between college sophomores' English reading and writing proficiency development? Is TBLT method a more effective way to improve the sophomores' English reading and writing proficiency?

College English, a required English course in universities in China, is a foundation course for most college students. It basically consists of English reading, writing, listening and speaking. As the most important parts of the college English class, reading and writing have been emphasized for quite a long time in China's college English teaching. Traditionally, numerous and jumbled materials are assigned for students to read in class, with the set steps of reading, exercising and explaining. Besides, students in junior grade have very limited reading ability and writing experience in English. Therefore, usually under the circumstance of practical use, those traditional teaching methods easily lead students to become tired of huge number of words and exercises that are thought to be necessary for them to promote their English reading and writing ability in college English class.

## **Definition of Terms**

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an educational framework for the theory and practice of teaching second or foreign languages. Based on empirical research, TBLT adopts meaning-based, communicative tasks as the central unit for defining language learning needs, determining curriculum goals, designing activity in the (language) classroom, and assessing

language competencies.

Simply, the TBLT method is to design tasks for language learners through the process of teaching. In the process of completing the task, learners achieve the proficiency of using the target language naturally. (Task-based Language Teaching, 2017)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an analytic approach to syllabus design and methodology in which chains of information-gathering, problem-solving and evaluative tasks are used to organize language teaching and learning; these interdependent pedagogical tasks, which combine insights from socio-linguistics and psycholinguistic research, are designed to methodologically simulate the communicative events which learners encounter in specific second language-using environment (Markee, 1994).

Nunan (1999) defines task-based language teaching as follows: "Task-based language teaching is an approach to the design of language course in which the point of departure is not an ordered list of linguistic items, but a collection of tasks."

TBLT emphasizes the importance of organizing a course around communicative tasks that learners need to do outside the classroom, and stresses learners doing tasks that require communicative language use. Nunan (1991) summarizes five features of TBLT:

- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

- An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Willis (1996) sums up the features of TBLT as follows:

- All tasks should have an outcome... It is the challenge of achieving the outcome that makes TBLT a motivating procedure in the classroom.

- An important feature of TBLT is that learners are free to choose whatever language forms they wish to convey what they mean, in order to fulfill as well as they can, the task goals.

- The teacher can monitor from a distance and especially in monolingual class and encourage all attempts to communicate in the target language. Nevertheless, this is not the time for advice or correction. Learners need to feel free to experiment with language on their own and to take risks. Fluency in communication is what counts. In later stages of the task, framework accuracy does matter, but it is not so important at the task stage.

- Some approaches to language teaching talk in terms of four separate skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing... Teachers following a task-based cycle naturally foster combinations of skills depending on the task. The skills form an integral part of the process of the achieving the task goals; they are not being practiced singly, in a vacuum.

To sum up, the goal for TBLT is to providing enormous language input for learners and make sure that learners set clearly defined goals, which could makes language teaching more communicative and effective.

## Task

When it comes to the concept of task-based teaching, the first thing we need to do is to decide just what we mean by the term “task” itself, especially from pedagogical perspective.

Nunan (2004) concludes that in all communicative tasks learner’s attention is focused on meaning rather than linguistic structure. He defined task as a kind of classroom work that required learners’ participation in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language. At the same time learners’ attention is focused on “mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to convey meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.” (Nunan, 2004, p.4) This is also the most commonly cited pedagogical definition.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This paper aims to evaluate if the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method is effective in China's college English classes, which mainly focus on developing student's English reading and writing ability. In particular, the research will explore if the TBLT method can promote college sophomores' English proficiency in reading and writing.

### **Significance of the Study**

Under the guideline of China's National English Curriculum Standard (2007) , most English classes in China began using task-based language teaching approaches from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in colleges and universities. In traditional English class, teachers explain with texts sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, explaining

language points, analyzing sentences, providing the Chinese equivalents and giving examples to show the usage of certain words and expressions. Therefore, students easily feel bored and tired, and probably lose their interests in learning English. TBLT focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the language. The result of this study could throw a light on if the TBLT could promote college students' English ability and to provide some evidence to further study the TBLT adopted in college English class. Instructors and teachers who are teaching college English in China, or doing research about TBLT could find some useful evidence in this paper and facilitate their further study.

### **Methodology**

Analysis of the results of achievement test and comparison of the results of the pre-test and the post-test were made. The pre-test and the post-test were:

Pre-test (English exam at the end of last semester in July 2016)

Post-test (Designed exam in the end of the semester in December, 2016)

The two exams were designed with similar writing and reading tests.

The type of the exam questions included composition writing, cloze, reading comprehension (with multiple choices questions).

The participants were from two classes of non-English major sophomore in the same department of a college in a southern university in China. One class was chosen as control class, the other as experimental class. TBLT method was applied to the experimental class and the controlled class will still adopt the traditional teaching method.

## **Chapter II Review of Literature**

This study involved the use of TBLT in teaching English reading and writing, so a brief review of the research about reading and writing will be made in this chapter. Moreover, a brief history of TBLT and its development in China will be reviewed as well.

### **Relationship between Reading and Writing**

Reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately (Grabe, 2005). In this process "the writer encodes thought as language and a reader decodes language to thought". People read because they want to get information. Therefore, reading is a two-fold phenomenon that includes process comprehension and product comprehension.

Intensive reading and extensive reading are two primary types of reading. Bamford (1984) and Day (1994) define intensive reading as the careful reading of shorter, more difficult foreign language texts with the goal of complete and detailed understanding. Extensive reading, in contrast, is generally associated with reading large amounts of text for general comprehension.

Writing is a process of exploring one's thoughts, externalizing and giving performance to the thoughts. Writing reflects the ideas of writers, bridging the gap between readers and writers. It is not a simple way in gathering sentences or words together but to communicate with others.

As a social act and writer usually write to communicate with an audience, the text

produced by writers is the product of a socio-cognitive process, which requires complex cognitive abilities, linguistic and cultural competence (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Raimes (1987) put forward that there were several purposes of writing: reinforcement, training, imitation, communication, fluency and learning. Based on the purposes, writing can be classified into four different types: reinforcement writing, drill writing, imitative writing and communicative writing.

Peter Elbow and other researchers who support an expressive approach have argued that reading has traditionally held a privileged place in the English teaching while writing has played a secondary role. Most frequently, writing reflects the principle that input should take precedence over the output (Zamel, 1992). However, writing should be a means to discover and explore ideas, which in turn stimulates the skills of listening and speaking. The four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing should be regarded as an integrated part. Therefore, the learning process should be designed to include the four skills systematically. By using the task-based approach, teachers can encourage students to develop their four skills during the process of accomplishing a task. For example, in the beginning of English class, reading and listening practice to some relative materials could provide students with useful information as language input, helping them to speak or discuss and turn the input into intake, which could in turn promote their writing ability.

### **Brief History of TBLT**

TBLT was introduced under the backgrounds of communicative teaching used extensively in the 1980s. At the beginning, researchers defined a task as practice of language

in the classroom, even mixed tasks and special teaching techniques (Brown, 1994).

Researchers and teachers have discussed some problems of the task since then. From that time on, TBLT under the frame of the communicative language teaching has created new styles and aroused extensive concern in language teaching field. Many foreign linguist such as Duff (1986), Nunan (1989), Prabhu (1987), Foster and Skehan (1996, 1998) have done some research extensively on TBLT from different aspects and they have developed and perfected the theory of TBLT continuously.

Duff (1989) defined two types of pedagogic tasks, and Nunan (1989) thought there are many function-based task in language teaching that are not based on real life. He emphasized the importance of the real-life task. Prabhu (1987) discussed the basic format of the task. Foster and Skehan (1998) thought the completion of task should go first.

### **TBLT in China**

China has a relatively later start on the research of TBLT. With the development of education reform, more and more studies of TBLT have been published in important periodicals and academic journals.

In 2004, Ministry of Education of China drafted the College English Curriculum Requirements (Tentative Edition) and proposed the objectives of college English Curriculum. The objectives include cultivating the students' ability to use English in comprehensive way so that they can use written or oral English to communicate effectively in their work and social activities. TBLT, as one of the most efficient and new teaching models, has been brought into more and more teachers' view and been widely used in all levels of English

classes.

Some researchers and education practitioners in China have advocated applying TBLT since the early 1990s. In the early period of introduction of this approach to China, most domestic researchers laid emphasis on the introduction of TBLT from abroad and traced the theory of social constructivism as one of the major theoretical basis of TBLT. Gong and Luo (2006) explored some current understanding of tasks from different perspectives and gave practical guidelines on implementing teaching tasks in classrooms. They also conducted nationwide research on task-based learning and teaching.

Minhua Zhou (2010) put forward the idea of designing task with different links from easy tasks to difficult ones, focusing mainly on how students communicate. He believed that students learn how to use a language in the process of fulfilling tasks.

Hui Zhou (2013) summarized the features of TBLT and recommended effective ways of designing task. She believed that tasks should be designed according to student's English ability and the immediate evaluation during tasks should be emphasized.

The research on TBLT in China in the last 2 decades has thrived, but the present studies also have some shortcomings. Many studies still focus on the introduction and analysis based on the research results from abroad, and the achievements of practical application researches are relatively scattered. An effective evaluation system for task-based language teaching and assessment is still under discussion and needs further study.

### **Chapter III Pilot Study**

The TBLT approach has been widely used in the English class in China, but there are a lot of differences in its effectiveness because of many factors, such as the late start of applying TBLT and the different levels of students. Trying to explore how TBLT works and how effective it is in China's college English teaching in improving student's reading and writing proficiency, a pilot study was conducted to answer the research questions.

#### **Research Questions**

This research aimed to evaluate if the TBLT method is effective in China's college English teaching. It also provided a description of applying TBLT strategy to find if Chinese college student's English proficiency in reading and writing could be improved. Therefore, two research questions are posed as follows:

1. Is there any significant difference between the TBLT and traditional approach in improving Chinese college student's English proficiency in reading and writing?
2. Is TBLT an effective method in improving Chinese college student's English proficiency in reading and writing?

#### **Hypotheses**

Hypotheses are based on the above research questions:

1. There is no significant difference in English reading and writing proficiency between the experimental class and the control class in the pre-test.
2. There is a significant difference in English reading and writing proficiency between the experimental class and the control class in the post-test.
3. The experimental class outperforms the control class in the post-test.

## **Participants**

The subjects chosen for the study are 75 non-English major sophomore students in Wuhan Technology and Business University (WTBU) in Wuhan city, Hubei Province. Nearly all of the students are around 20 in age and have at least 6 years' experience in learning English in their early education. They were admitted to WTBU with nearly the same average scores in the National University Entrance Examination in China. In WTBU, students are tested into different English classes of two levels at the beginning of their first year according to their scores on the English test of the National University Entrance Examination. Level A class consists of students with relatively higher scores while level B class students' scores are lower. The students chosen are from 2 parallel level A classes, and both the classes are learning English using the same course syllabuses, teaching materials and with the same instructor. All of the students are in their second academic year in college after their one-year course work with the same learning condition and teaching aids. In this pilot study, one of the classes was chosen as the experimental class (EC), which was taught with TBLT in the English course. The other class was chosen as the control class (CC), which was taught with the traditional approach in the English course.

## **Instruments**

### **Pre-test**

To make sure that there are no significant difference between the experimental class and control class in their reading and writing proficiency in the beginning stage of the study, a pre-test was given. Both the classes had taken the same English examination in July 2016, the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> academic year. This examination consisted of 5 parts: Listening Comprehension,

Banked Cloze, Reading Comprehension, Cloze and Writing. The results of Reading Comprehension and Writing from the examination were collected. The two classes' scores were evaluated using PASW Statistics 18.0 (Predictive Analytics Software) for data analysis.

### **Post-test**

The experiment lasted 3 months and after that, all the students from the experimental class and control class were given a post-test to see if their English reading and writing proficiency improved. In January 2017, the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the second academic year, the two classes took the same term examination for English course. This examination also consisted of 5 parts: Listening Comprehension, Banked Cloze, Reading Comprehension, Cloze and Writing. The results of reading comprehension test and writing test from the examination were collected. The two classes' scores were evaluated using PASW Statistics 18.0 (Predictive Analytics Software) for data analysis.

### **Experimental Procedure**

The study lasted 12 weeks, from October 2016 to December 2016. The two classes took English class twice a week and under the guidance of the same teacher.

### **Pre-test**

Students from the experimental class and the control group were given the same pre-test at 9:00 a.m. on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. All the reading materials and writing were selected from the College English Test band 4 (CET4). CET is a national English achievement test for college students in China. It is also considered the most important reference test of English ability for non-English major students in China. The pre-test has 100 points. Reading Comprehension accounts for 40% (40 points), while writing accounts for 20% (20 points). Students in both

classes were required to finish within 100 minutes.

### **Task-design**

For Chinese students who learn English as a foreign language, the interest in language is the key factor that can make them focus on the language and stimulate students' desire to learn. Therefore, more attention could be paid to the diversity and authenticity of the material in the process of the task designing. It is better to select some materials that can spark the students' learning enthusiasm to improve the effectiveness of teaching. At the same time, the tasks should be connected with appropriate difficulty, and achieve the purpose of teaching step by step.

***Pre-reading and pre-writing task:*** Design a task that require preparation and planning to motivate students' interest and stimulate their desire to read or write before the instruction of reading or writing.

***While-reading and while- writing task:*** It is not easy to make students have their motivation in reading English material or writing. In reading, when students understand what they read, they will have a sense of achievement. When they are able to write a passage, they will feel the same way. Teachers should design some tasks that give students the opportunity to show what they could do with reading and writing by themselves. In this way, they could take the initiative to get more information to read and write.

***Post-reading and post-writing task:*** In the process of language learning, the input of language aims at achieving the output, for example, an application letter writing. Therefore, some open tasks design is necessary. These tasks can help students to take the initiative to use English to achieve the transformation and the combination of the two abilities and enhance

language skills.

### **Post-test**

Students from the experimental class and the control group were given the same pre-test at 9:00 a.m. on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. All the reading materials and writing were selected from the College English Test band 4 (CET4). The pre-test has 100 points. Reading comprehension accounts for 40% (40 points), while writing accounts for 20% (20 points). Students in both classes were required to finish within 100 minutes.

### **Data analysis**

Scores of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed by Independent-Sample t-test with PASW Statistics (version 18.0).

### **Experimental Process for the Experimental Class**

College English course in China refers to the English Integrated course. The course emphasizes mainly on intensive reading but also on other skills like listening, speaking, writing and translating.

The experimental class consisted of 39 Finance sophomore students. The class was randomly picked from level A classes.

In this part, the teaching plan of college English course for a period from a teaching unit was taken randomly as an example to show how the task-based approach was applied in the experimental class.

### **Model 1:**

Time: November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Teaching subject: Students in the experimental class

Teaching material: Five Famous Symbols of American Culture (Unit 4, New Horizon College English Book 3)

Teaching objective: Students will be able to:

- a. learn some related background information about symbols of different countries and USA.
- b. understand the content of the text and practice reading skills.
- c. explore their ability to write similar English passages in introducing some symbols in China.

Teaching method: Task-based approach

Number of students: 39

Time period: 90 minutes

### ***Step 1 Brian Storming***

Task: List words of symbols from different countries as more as possible. (Assigned task from previous period of class)

Aim: To help the students prepare some words related to the topic of the unit and arouse their interest in the text.

Time: 10 minutes

### ***Step 2: Integral Reading and Group discussion***

Task: Group report of the information about the symbols such as the designer of the symbol, time and place, etc. Students were divided into 5 groups to read the text and discuss some detailed information of all 5 symbols: the Statue of Liberty, the Barbie, the American gothic, the Buffalo Nickel and Uncle Sam. Every group was in charge of

reporting one of the symbols to class and answered questions from other groups.

Aim: To help students to understand the text with detailed information.

Time: 20 minutes.

### ***Step 3 Mini Role Play***

Task: Make a role-playing presentation to introduce the 5 famous symbols. Every group was assigned a symbol and wrote an instruction for the role.

The roles assigned are as follows:

Group one: Touring Guide (the Statue of Liberty)

Group two: Salesperson (the Barbie)

Group three: Painter (the American gothic)

Group four: Collector (the Buffalo Nickel)

Group five: Teacher of history (Uncle Sam)

Aim: To help students to drill the text and apply its words and sentences in practical using.

Time: 40 minutes.

### ***Step 4 Structured Writing***

Task: Students were required to write a short passage with at least 100 words, 3 paragraphs in English with a similar structure of the section in the text to introduce a famous Chinese symbol for a newspaper column. When finish writing, students would exchange their compositions with each other, and get ready for evaluation in the next class period.

Aim: to help students to practice their writing skill with imitation.

Time: 20 minutes.

### **Experimental Process for the Control Class**

The control class consists of 36 Management sophomore students. The class was also randomly picked from level A classes.

The instruction of control class followed the material-centered and teacher-centered pattern. In other words, an instructor teaches students by translating and explaining sentences and expressions from the material, giving students evaluation and feedback directly after doing an exercise or practice using assigned materials. The pattern is generally composed of the procedures as follows:

#### **Leading in**

Students were assigned to prepare the new vocabularies before class. The teacher showed some pictures to ask students about the words related, explained the meaning of the words and then asked students to make sentences with the words to learn how to use them.

#### **In-depth Reading**

After a brief introduction to the text and its structure, the teacher asked students to read the text paragraph by paragraph, explained the meaning of the sentences and expressions to help students to understand the content and memorize useful sentence patterns and expressions.

#### **Assignment for exercise**

The teacher assigned some exercises on word usage, grammar, sentence structure, translation and writing to students to check how well they understood the text and used what they had learned in class. For example, students were asked to fill in 10 blanks with words

and expressions from a vocabulary list to complete a passage. Another example is that students were required to write sentences with a model from the text, using the subjunctive mood.

### **Evaluation or feedback on exercise**

The teacher collected students' exercises, graded them and gave evaluation or feedback through correcting the answer, helping students to improve their understanding of the text and the ability to use what they had learned correctly.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

During the pilot study, the result was collected from two sources: all the participants' scores on the reading comprehension part and writing part from the pre-test at the beginning of the experiment, and all the participants' scores on the reading comprehension part and writing part from the post-test at the end of the experiment. Their scores were analyzed in Independent-Sample t-test with PASW Statistics (version 18.0). The Independent-Sample t-test could determine whether there was a significant difference between the experimental class and the control class. In addition, whether TBLT is effective or not can be determined through a comparative analysis of the students' performance before and after the experiment period.

### **Results and Findings**

#### **Results and Interpretation of Pre-test**

To determine if there were significant differences in performance in the pre-test between the experimental class and the control class, the students' mean scores on reading comprehension part and writing part were compared by the independent samples t-test. Group

descriptive statistics and the result of the independent samples t-test for the experimental class (EC) and the control class (CC) were shown in the table below.

**Result in Reading**

Table 1: Group descriptive statistics for EC and CC in pre-test (reading part)

**Group Statistics**

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	EC	39	31.8462	4.33795	.69463
	CC	36	30.7222	4.08909	.68151

Table 2: Result of the Independent Sample t-test for EC and CC in the pre-test (reading part)

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.158	.692	1.152	73	.253	1.12393	.97546	-.82015	3.06801
	Equal variances not assumed			1.155	72.964	.252	1.12393	.97312	-.81552	3.06338

Table 1 shows that the mean score of the experimental class is 31.8462 and the standard deviation is 4.33795 while the mean score of the control class is 30.7222 and the standard deviation is 4.08909. According to Table 2, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.253, which is higher than 0.05. This implies that the difference between the experimental class (EC) and the control

class (CC) was not significant. The result in the pre-test showed the two classes had the same proficiency level on reading.

***Result in Writing***

Table 3: Group descriptive statistics for EC and CC in pre-test (writing part)

**Group Statistics**

Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	EC	39	14.3077	2.04108	.32683
	CC	36	15.0278	2.22308	.37051

Table 4: Result of the Independent Sample t-test for EC and CC in pre-test (writing part)

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.095	.759	-1.463	73	.148	-.72009	.49236	-1.70136	.26119
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.457	71.042	.149	-.72009	.49406	-1.70521	.26504

Table 3 shows that the mean score of the experimental class is 14.3077 and the standard deviation is 2.04108 while the mean score of the control class is 15.0278 and standard deviation is 2.22308. According to Table 4, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.148, which is higher than 0.05. This implies that the difference between the EC and CC was not significant. Their performance in the pre-test showed the two classes had the same proficiency level on writing.

## Results and Interpretation of Post-test

To determine if there were significant differences of performance in the post-test between the experimental class and the control class, the mean scores on reading comprehension part and writing part were compared by the independent samples t-test. Group descriptive statistics and the result of the independent samples t-test for the experimental class (EC) and the control class (CC) were shown in the table below.

### *Result in reading*

Table 5: Group descriptive statistics for EC and CC in the post-test (reading part)

#### Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	EC	39	34.0000	3.17888	.50903
	CC	36	30.9444	4.01386	.66898

Table 6: Result of the Independent Sample t-test for EC and CC in the post-test (reading part)

#### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	1.465	.230	3.669	73	.000	3.05556	.83285	1.39570	4.71541

Equal variances not assumed			3.635	66.675	.001	3.05556	.84062	1.37752	4.73359
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Table 5 shows that the mean score of the experimental class is 34.0000 and the standard deviation is 3.17888 while the mean score of the control class is 30.9444 and the standard deviation is 4.01386. According to Table 6, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000, which is much lower than 0.05. This implies that there was a significant difference between the experimental class (EC) and the control class (CC). This means the reading ability of the experimental class is not equal to that of the control class. The statistics showed that the experimental class obviously outperformed the control class in the reading test.

### ***Result in writing***

Table 7: Group descriptive statistics for EC and CC in the post-test (writing part)

#### **Group Statistics**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score EC	39	15.9744	1.36666	.21884
CC	36	14.9722	1.96376	.32729

Table 8: Result of the Independent Sample t-test for EC and CC in the post-test (writing part)

#### **Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	6.104	.016	2.581	73	.012	1.00214	.38821	.22844	1.77583

Equal variances not assumed			2.545	61.896	.013	1.00214	.39372	.21508	1.78919
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Table 7 shows that the mean score of the experimental class is 15.9744 and standard deviation is 1.36666 while the mean score of the control class is 14.9722 and the standard deviation is 4.01386. According to Table 8 the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.013, which is much lower than 0.05. This implies that there was a significant difference between the experimental class (EC) and the control class (CC). This means the writing ability of the experimental class was not equal to that of the control class. The statistics showed that the experimental class obviously outperformed the control class in the writing test.

### **Summary**

Despite the similar performance in the pre-test, the results of the statistics analysis indicate that students in the experimental class significantly improved their performance in reading and writing after the experiment. The success of the experiment proves that the application of the TBLT is effective.

## **Chapter III Conclusion and Implication**

### **Conclusion**

The result of the analysis shows that there are significant differences between the experimental class and the control class in reading and writing performance in the post-test. Evidently, students from the experimental class improved their English reading and writing proficiency.

There appeared statistically differences in reading and writing proficiency between the experimental class and the control class. The performance of the two classes in the pre-test and the post-test demonstrated that the TBLT approach promoted students' reading and writing proficiency when compared with the traditional approach.

The success of the experiment has led to the following conclusion:

Task-based Language Teaching method is effective in improving Chinese college students' English reading and writing proficiency.

Nevertheless, some individual cases cannot prove the effectiveness of the TBLT. For example, 5 students in the experimental class did not make any improvement in the post-test, while 4 students in the control class significantly improved their performance in the post-test. The examples cannot be used as proof to illustrate the conclusion. Considering the result of all students, the study confirms the hypothesis of the experimental research.

### **Implications**

Teachers play a very important role in implementing the task-based language teaching approach to enhance teaching and learning performance. They also need to keep abreast of advanced theories and methods to improve their effective teaching. Reasonable task

designing is also very important. The success of task-based teaching depends largely on the design of communication tasks. The design of the task should motivate students to learn English. It should not only be feasible and communicative, but also have the pragmatic and contextual authenticity.

TBLT has its advantages, but it cannot be used as the only way to improve college student's English ability. It is also important to integrate other teaching methods into college English teaching.

### **Limitations**

The result of the pilot study proved the hypothesis in the beginning of this paper and efforts were made to ensure the validity of the research. Nevertheless, the study also has some limitations.

1. The number of the participants is relatively small and they come from the same college. The findings are not representative of all universities in China.

2. Colleges in China usually select teaching materials, and determine the teaching content. For example, teachers at WTBU are required to strictly follow the teaching plan written with the same template.

3. The evaluation of the performance of both experimental class and control class was based on traditional English examination (such as multiple-choice questions and writing with an outline) in China. A relatively scientific performance assessment system is needed. For example, the assessment focusing on a reaction to a book or an article in English can be conducted. It might become the research topic in future studies of TBLT.

In a word, this research has lent some support to the fact that TBLT is an effective

teaching method in promoting English reading and writing proficiency of China's college students. Finally, the TBLT still needs further exploration in future, such as the study on task designing and control for students of different English level. The specific implementation of TBLT also needs further study.

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