

Effects of Task-Based Language Teaching on Improving Grade 11 Students' Essay Writing Skills

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Abstract—This quasi-experimental study aimed to examine the effects of task-based language teaching (TBLT) on improving students' essay writing skills in terms of content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. To that end, participants of Grade 11 students at Otona Secondary School were assigned as experimental and control groups using simple random sampling technique. The students in the experimental group were taught essay writing via TBLT, whereas those in the control group were taught essay writing through the conventional method. Additionally, the teaching material was developed from students' textbooks for the experimental group. Relevant data were gathered via essay writing skills tests. The independent sample t-test calculated for the pre-test divulged that the students in both the experimental and control groups had similar writing skills in the stated sub-skills (t-values < 1.47, p-values > .552). Independent sample t-test measured for post-test, however, depicted that students in experimental group significantly surpassed students in control group in each of the stated sub-skills of writing (t-values > -5.79, p-values < .000). Interviews held with six selected students from the experimental group revealed that TBLT enabled them to improve their writing skills in terms of content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. It also improved their interest to write and perceptions of working with peers and within groups. This suggests that Secondary School students benefit the application of TBLT using listing, problem solving and sharing personal information tasks thus it helped them to improve essay writing skills.

Index Terms—CLT, task-based language teaching, essay writing skills, EFL

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The ultimate goal of language teaching is to enable learners to use the language in real-world communication. To achieve this goal, different approaches have been used in the teaching of language over time, and two of the main ones are the structural and communicative approaches. The structural approach focuses on the breakdown of structures that make up a given language, while communicative approach promotes language use and practice (Littlewood, 2012).

Still, there are other pedagogical methods that continue to proliferate in the post-communicative era. Although they incorporate certain communicative principles, most of them are branches of CLT; they also refer to previous trends for some of their central tenets (Rodgers, 2001). According to Richards (2006), they are extensions of CLT. One of them is task-based language teaching (TBLT). It is a modified form of CLT that focuses primarily on the communicative aspects of a language. Furthermore, TBLT is a method that uses tasks as the core unit of analysis, planning, and instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Theoretically, TBLT, as underpinned by cognitive and sociocultural perspectives (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). In cognitive perspective, knowledge is the product of learning and it the product of interaction between heredity and environment (Piaget, 1970). According to sociocultural theory, learning arises from interaction, and it is claimed that participants in learning always co-construct the activity they engage in.

TBLT is a modified form of CLT that focuses primarily on communicative aspects of language (Ellis, 2009; Willis & Willis, 2007). Developing students' communicative skills is one of the objectives of language teaching. The aim of language learning is the learner's capacity to interact gracefully in the target language (Ellis, 2003). In TBLT, students are given different tasks to work on individually, in pairs, or as a group. Through accomplishing the tasks, they can develop language skills indirectly through interaction rather than directly studying them.

Among the four language skills, writing plays an essential role in the academic context as well as everyday life. In education, writing is a predictor of academic success. Writing is also an indispensable area of the school curriculum and

a significant part of students' careers. "The writing skill is the major tool for learning" (Hairstone, 1986, p. 2). When students upgrade, more writing performance is expected. McWhorter (1996; as cited in Zeleke, 2014) also claimed as a general rule, the further the students' progress in their education, the more writing skill they will be expected to perform. In addition, writing is essentially a social act and an integral part of everyday life. Indeed, in certain fields, communication can only be done in writing, such as memos, formal proposals, and letters, among others. Therefore, language learners should master the skill of writing.

Despite the importance of writing skills in a student's life both in and after school, it seems to be a heavy task for most. That's because writing skills are considered complex cognitive skills since they require students to apply appropriate cognitive strategies, intellectual skills, verbal information, and appropriate motivation (Tierney, 1989; cited in Wondwosen, 2016). Moreover, unlike speaking, writing is not a natural talent (White in Khoo, 1981). As Meseret (2012) posited, writing is an important but complex task to master. It is a difficult task which expects language learners to search thoughts and ideas and then make it real and seeable. Thus, great attention should be pay to improving these most important and challenging skills.

Language teaching methods in which writing skills are taught are believed to affect students' writing skills. To improve these skills, there should be an approach or a method that can build students' understanding of writing. Scholars have proven that TBLT is indeed effective in developing students' understanding of the writing process and writing skills (Kusnawati, 2014). Other research has also proven that the application of TBLT gives learners various opportunities to perform written tasks at different levels of cognitive complexity (Tabar & Alavi, 2013). It is for this reason that the current research aims at assessing the effects of TBLT on students' essay writing skills.

B. Statement of the Problem

Writing is one of the most important skills of language that have holographic reward in different facets of human life (Mesfin, 2013). Students' academic success is highly dependent on their writing skills (Don, 2007; Eman, 2014; Naila, 2006). Thus, writing is an important part of language education, and by valuing it, educators can provide students with the skills they need to succeed in school as well as in the workforce. On the other hand, a lack of basic writing ability affects the academic success of students at almost every level of education. This indicates that writing skills play a significant role in enabling students to achieve their academic goals throughout their learning. In addition, writing is one of the means of human communication; people usually write to communicate thoughts, facts, feelings, attitudes, and ideas clearly. Thus, students have to develop writing skills to meet their academic goals as well as to be able to communicate with others in life.

The experiences of the present researchers in teaching English at secondary schools show that the writing performance of the majority of students is deteriorating alarmingly. In studies conducted on issues related to teaching of writing skills, scholars around the country have reflected that their students, too, seem to have a lot of difficulty in writing effectively. The students were poor at writing content, organizing, grammar, and vocabulary. Regarding this, researchers argued that, after more than ten years of writing instruction, Ethiopian secondary school students are expected to construct reasonably correct sentences in their writings. Unfortunately, they cannot even write a single grammatically correct sentence in their essays (Dereje, 2001; Haregewain, 2008; Tesfaye, 1991). In addition, "Many secondary school English teachers in Ethiopia, however, are often heard complaining that most of their students are incompetent of producing reasonably efficient written work" (Mesfin, 2004, p. 1).

Furthermore, the causes of low writing performance can be various, but include inappropriate teaching methodology, learners' low motivation in learning English, and the limited time of the teaching-learning process (Aychiluhm, 2015; Meseret, 2012). Therefore, the proper application of alternative approaches and methods is essential for the improvement of writing performance.

Various studies conducted both abroad and within Ethiopia assessed the effects of TBLT on students' writing skills. For instance, Sundari et al. (2018) assessed the effectiveness of task-based materials in improving university students' writing skills. The result showed that the use of task-based materials has significant effects on students' writing performance. Kusnawati (2014) also assessed whether TBLT increases the students' understanding of the writing process and writing skills. He found that TBLT increased their knowledge of both.

Additionally, Ahmed and Bidin (2016) examined the effect of TBLT on the writing skills of EFL learners in Malaysia. The result proved that TBLT is effective in improving writing skills. Dirgeyasa (2018) also examined the effect of TBLT on tertiary ESOL learners' academic writing achievement. The result indicated that there was a significant effect of TBLT on tertiary ESOL learners' writing achievement compared to the classical method of teaching.

In another study, Ahmed (2018) assessed the effect of TBLT on improving the writing and speaking skills of Pakistani ESL learners and found that TBLT improved L2 writing and speaking skills. Kafipour et al. (2018) also assessed the effect of TBLT on analytic writing in EFL classrooms. They found that task-based writing improved EFL learners' writing content, sentence mechanics, language use, vocabulary and organization. Moreover, Tabar and Alavi (2013) examined effects of task-based writing on intermediate students' writing skill in personal and decision-making tasks. Their study has also proven that the application of TBLT provides learners with different opportunities to perform written tasks at different levels of cognitive complexity.

Among local researchers, Meseret (2012) explored the perceptions of both instructors and learners and the practice of task-based writing in an EFL context. The result of his study showed that, though challenging, the teaching of task-based

writing is possible. In addition, Aychiluhm (2015) assessed the implementation of a task-based approach in teaching writing, and he found that most teachers are not properly implementing task-based activities to teach writing skills.

However, this study was different from the local studies. Firstly, this research focused mainly on essay writing skills; thus, it differed in research variables. Secondly, almost all the research that was conducted in Ethiopia was through surveys; this research was quasi-experimental. Thus, it is different from the previous studies in the research design too. Finally, this research differed in setting and grade level from other studies.

In the present literature on TBLT study, there is a research gap and shortfall to assess the effectiveness of TBLT in improving essay writing, particularly in the Ethiopian EFL context. Most of the earlier local studies have focused on the effects of TBLT on the learners' speaking performance and reading. Therefore, this study will fill in this gap.

C. Objectives of the Study

This study was intended to examine the effects of TBLT on the students' essay writing skills. Specifically, this study was aimed at assessing the effects of TBLT on students' essay writing in terms of writing content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as their perceptions about the application of TBLT in essay writing.

D. Hypothesis of the Study

To attain the aim of this study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

HO1: There was no statistically significant difference in writing contents, organization, using correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary among experimental and control groups in pre- and post-tests.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT is one of the methods that deals with different tasks that students perform as protagonists of their own learning process in order to clearly share their ideas and thoughts. Before we go forward with the definition of TBLT, however, we must enrich our knowledge about the definition of task.

For instance, a task is a piece of classroom activity or exercise which allows students to comprehend, manipulate, produce, or interact in the target language while they focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to pass meaning rather than to manipulate rule (Nunan, 2004). Moreover, a task is a work plan that requires students to process language in a realistic manner to achieve a desired goal (Meseret, 2012). According to her definition, a task has an objective, content, and working procedure. Task is work plan that involves the main emphases on meaning, and also involves real-life processes of language use (Ellis, 2003). According to him, a task also involves some kind of reasoning gap to fill. Tasks boost learners to depend on their linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, and it can involve one or more of the four language skills; and it also engages cognitive processes and has a clearly identified interactive goal (Ellis, 2003).

Thus, the definition of TBLT leads beyond the knowledge of language and reflects the capacity to use the language duly in real-life settings. TBLT is a method of language teaching that allows interaction and communication as a goal of language learning in which tasks are used as core elements of the learning process. TBLT is also defined as instruction that uses classroom activities, which are similar to tasks in which students engage outside, as a tool to teach language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

TBLT refers to a method of language teaching that uses tasks as the main units of planning and teaching. It gives emphases on the use of genuine language and on asking learners to do purposeful tasks using the language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In TBLT, students are given tasks to do in pairs, groups, and teams. This may help the students develop language skills by providing them with more opportunities to interact with each other.

In writing classrooms, students have been given different kinds of writing tasks to complete in groups and teams. Accordingly, the writing tasks facilitate meaningful interactions, offer language learners ample exposure to process meaningful input, and produce meaningful output to achieve the intended writing objective.

B. Framework for Task-Based Language Teaching

Willis (1996) has specified a three-step procedure: the pre-task, the task phase, and language focus.

(a). Pre-Task Phase

This phase is an overview of the task and topic. Here, the teacher prepares the students to do a task by first trying to make them familiar with the topic. The teacher then presents the topic and suitable words in addition to relative knowledge are offered to the students. Reading or listening to sample tasks done before should be given to pique students' involvement and motivation. At pre-task phase, the students' cognitive structures are triggered, and important attempt are made to capture their concentration and engage them vigorously in the task or activity (Willis, 1996).

(b). Task Cycle

This phase consists of three stages (Willis, 1996). The first is the “Task” stage. In this stage, the students are assigned a task and get actively involved in it. The second stage is “Planning”. Here, students attempt to organize a report of what they have made in the task stage. They plan to report their performance in the class orally or in writing. Finally, the third stage is “Report”. In the report stage, the students’ reports are displayed in the class, and their results are explored. Here, the students present their task to the class and explain how they achieved an outcome, and the different results of the groups or pairs are compared (Willis, 1996).

(c). *Language Focus*

This phase consists of analysis and practice, as well as a focus on language rules (Willis, 1996). Students view the written text to develop their lexicon and grammar. The teacher’s role is a leader at this stage by offering the students constructive feedback. Moreover, corrective evaluations can be made in language focus phase (Willis, 1996).

C. *Theoretical Background on Task-Based Language Teaching*

Theoretically, TBLT is underpinned by cognitive and sociocultural views as both stress the roles of interpersonal interaction in cognitive development (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), which is a basic constituent of TBLT (Lee, 2000). Hence, cognitive perspective takes knowledge as the product of learning and because of interaction among innate and environmental factors (Piaget, 1970). In a cognitive view, a task is an instrument which leads students to participate in different kinds of knowledge processing which is considered to be significant for better language use (Piaget, 1970). According to sociocultural theory, learning arises through interaction. For them, learning a language is not an imprisoned activity; rather, it is a social act, a continuous reproductive process attached to the social-communicative interaction of a user (Vygotsky, 1986). He considers language as a social event. In his view, language is not the result of ‘isolated’ learning; it requires a social basis.

Still, most scholars agree that writing is a private cognitive skill that requires students’ individual hard work. Regarding this, Meseret (2012, p. 2) argues that writing is a form of academic suffer, and for most scholars, the teaching of writing is a type of professional torment so as it is commonly viewed a boring task and a solitary job. However, others agree that writing is a social activity that needs team members’ cooperation. Eman assures by saying that the writing process is not abstract, internal, and cognitive; rather, it is a socially situated activity (Eman, 2014). Words achieve a great social finesse and glow as the effect of reactions and responses with regard to a cultural audience (Warschauer, 1996). Therefore, writing is social work that postulates students’ cognition and collaboration.

Writing as a skill mixes cognitive and social components together in the process of social communication. It requires learners not merely to know how to write, rather requires knowing how to use writing in social situations. It is a process of accommodation of mental writing patterns to adjust new knowledge in social and cultural context (Meseret, 2012). In TBLT, writing is controlled by a task and used in interpersonal communication. The goal of TBLT is to develop students’ writing performance based on meaning interaction which cannot be detached of social situation (Meseret, 2012), which is the main feature of TBLT. Therefore, both cognitive and sociocultural theoretical perspectives examine TBLT in a comprehensive way.

D. *Advantages and Disadvantages of TBLT*

(a). *The Advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching*

Task-based language teaching has various advantages, three of which are detailed below:

1. *Increases Student Motivation*

The main advantage of TBLT is that it usually provides the learner with an active role in participating and increases their motivation for learning to write. Task-based activities basically motivate the students since these activities are compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy. TBLT is advantageous for students since it offers them a sense of “freedom and responsibility”, which seems likely to also increase student motivation (Branden, 2006). When it comes to teaching writing, studies have found that learning tasks are important in driving students’ motivation (Lam & Law, 2007; Tran, 2007).

2. *Offers Ample Exposure to the Target Language*

Task-based lessons offer more opportunities for the students to display their thinking through their writing. TBLT also gives students more freedom and a real-life context in which they can use the target language in the writing classroom. Hence, students have ample exposure to language and are exposed to a better range of lexical phrases, collocations, and language forms. In TBLT, the focus is basically on the writing itself rather than the correctness of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and so on. Therefore, task-based activities may make the students aware of what they do, how they do it, and how to act on the belief that they can learn the writing skills indirectly through interaction rather than directly studying them (Dorthy & Lisa, 2003).

3. *Maximizes Students’ Active Roles*

TBLT is learner-centered; thus, language learners can take more control of their own learning process because it allows students to get more involved in learning activities (Douglas & Kim, 2014).

(b). Disadvantages of Task-Based Language Teaching

This approach has its own drawbacks. According to Carless (2003), for instance, students' language proficiency causes a great challenge in implementing TBLT. He suggests that teachers be given more preparation time previously a task is set off. Moreover, tasks should be match with the level of students' language ability or competency (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011).

Other factors that hinder implementing TBLT are classroom management (Carless, 2004, 2002), student engagement (Carless, 2002), student and teacher accessibility (Bao & Du, 2015; Douglas & Kim, 2014; Yen, 2016), and students' learning styles (Bao & Du, 2015; Douglas & Kim, 2014). Willis (1996) also criticizes TBLT as difficult for teachers to apply appropriately, stating that teachers may feel uncomfortable stepping back and allowing learners to have more control over their learning.

However, explaining the benefits of a TBLT and the principles behind it can help overcome the challenges (Willis & Willis, 2007). Therefore, language teachers should know the disadvantages of TBLT to minimize and use it properly in writing classrooms.

E. The Nature and Importance of Writing

Writing is one of the most difficult language skills to learn because, to create a good final draft, there are too many things that must be done to get there.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the ability to write in English is a skill that students should master. However, writing is a skill that is considered to be more difficult than other language skills because there is so much that should be attended to when someone writes, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics (Hughes, 2003). These components are very important in writing, without which, it is difficult for the students to create a good writing result. It is for this reason that the current researcher focused on assessing the effects of TBLT on students' essay writing in terms of content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary.

An essay is a group of paragraphs that are developed in an organized way. It is a piece of writing on a particular issue. Besides, an essay is a short paper composed of 150 to 200 words and consists of a topic sentence and a series of sentences that support a main idea (Langan, 2005). Therefore, it can be summarized as essay writing is a physical process that takes time to form an arrangement of sentences ordered in a meaningful way and connected in definite ways cohesively and coherently (Lagan, 2005).

While students writing essays, they do not only create a text but also put their ideas, feelings, and emotions on paper. It is an important skill to communicate with others. Writing also impacts students' academic performance. Students' academic success is highly dependent on their writing skills (Don, 2007; Eman, 2014; Naila, 2006). Thus, writing skill is an essential and challenging skill, especially in the EFL context, in which students are exposed to the target language use for a few times (Kim & Kim, 2005). As a result, developing students writing skills is a must.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Participants

This study was mainly quasi-experimental and was conducted to examine the effects of task-based language teaching on improving students' essay writing skills with regard to contents, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. To this end, two sections of Grade 11 students of the Otona Secondary School at Wolita Sodo, Ethiopia, were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Hence, selected sections were intact classes, it was believed that participants of both sections had nearly similar performances in essay writing.

B. Instruments

Data gathering tools employed in the study were pre- and post-essay writing tests and interviews. The pretest was given aiming to assess the students' similarity in their background performance essay writing. The tests were used in order to gather quantitative data of the participants. As to Stephens (2004, p. 34) the main aim of the test is to assess means values of two groups when independent sample have been preferred. Pre- and post-tests of essay writing skills (see Appendix A) were prepared by the researcher. In the tests, the students provided two alternative topics and they have to choose one to write an essay. In addition, interviews (see Appendix B) were also held with six participants: two high scorers, two medium scorers, and two low scorers, and randomly selected students of the experimental group. The aim of the interview was to explore the students' perceptions about the implementation of TBLT in improving their essay writing skills. Participants in the study were one English language teacher who was selected using the convenient sampling technique and 80 Grade 11 students of the Otona Secondary School in the 2022/23 academic year.

C. Procedures of the Experiment

The intervention lasted for 16 weeks from 12 February to 09 June 2023. The pre-test was administered to both groups' participants a week before the intervention. Teaching material was prepared for the experimental group. The contents of essay writing tasks of the teaching material were made to be correspondent to the existing curriculum of a Grade 11 student's textbook. Contents were essay writing activities of Grade 11 students' textbook prepared in the framework of

TBLT. The teaching material was prepared based on Willis's (1996) TBLT framework with the three stages of pre-task, during task, and language focus.

The intervention was carried out using the same content but designed in the framework of TBLT. Experimental group participants taught writing lessons from Grade 11 textbooks via TBLT, whereas those in the control group were taught writing lessons without TBLT. It applied using listing tasks, problem solving tasks and sharing of personal information task types. Both groups were taught essay writing activities using similar lesson in their textbook in order to minimize bias. Furthermore, teacher's training manual, teaching materials, and rating rubrics were prepared before the intervention.

In the tests, the students were asked to write descriptive essays that consisted of 150-250 words in five paragraphs. The tests were intended to measure students' essay writing performances in terms of writing contents, organization, correct grammar, and appropriate vocabulary.

In addition, the result of interview proved the results of the tests. To this effect, out of 46 experimental group participants, six: two high scorers, two medium scorers, and two low scorers, were selected based on their test performance using the stratified random sampling technique.

D. Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data of the tests was computed employing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Independent sample t-test was applied to examine the pre-test result to know if there was a significant pre-existing difference between the experimental and control groups in their essay writing performances in terms of writing content, organization, using correct grammar, and appropriate vocabulary. Independent sample t-test was preferred since the groups were independent in that they were determined as experimental and control randomly. Besides, paired sample test was employed to assess the results of control and experimental groups; and to look whether the intervention brought improvement on the experimental group participants' essay writing skills.

IV. RESULTS

Results of Tests

A. Results of the Independent Sample T-Test of Essay Writing Skill Pre-Tests

The following table shows results of independent sample t-test calculated to examine if there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in pre-test.

In Table 1, below, the mean scores of control and experimental groups were 6.85 and 6.87, respectively, for the pre-test. The t-value is 1.47, and the p-value is .552. This indicated that, there is no statistically significant difference among the mean scores of intergroup on the essay writing pre-test. This implies that both groups had similar backgrounds in writing essays.

TABLE 1
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS' ESSAY WRITING PRE-TEST (N=80)

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	d/f	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	6.85	3.27	.560	1.47	78	.552*
Experimental	6.87	3.31	.549			

*p > 0.05 level

B. Results of the Independent Sample T-Test of Students' Essay Writing Performance in the Post-Tests

As can be seen from Table 2, below, mean score of control group is 6.82, whereas mean score of the experimental group is 11.65. P-values of both groups are 0.000, which is smaller than the alpha level. The figure shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups' post-tests result on the essay writing performance. This declared that experimental group participants brought considerable development on post-test compared to that of the control group participants' essay writing skills. The findings of tests proved TBLT contribute greatly to enhancing students' performance of essay writing.

TABLE 2
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS OF THE CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS IN POST-TEST (N=80)

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	d/f	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	6.82	3.17	.543	-5.79	78	.000*
Experimental	11.65	3.58	.615			

*p > 0.05 level

C. Results of the Paired Sample T-Test of Students' Essay Writing Performance Control Group in the Pre- and Post-Tests

Paired-sample t-test was used to compare the effects of the interventions in both groups. As shown in Table 3, below, the mean scores of control group participants' essay writing pre-test for content, grammar, organization and vocabulary are 1.72, 1.72, 1.66, and 1.74, respectively. Whereas, mean scores of the same group on essay writing post-test for the stated sub-variables are 1.71, 1.71, 1.67, and 1.72, respectively. The p-values are .631, .811, .823 and .607, respectively.

The result shows that there is no statistically significant difference between pre- and post-essay writing tests in terms of content, grammar, organization, and vocabulary. The p-values are greater than its average level of 0.05 for each sub-skills of writing.

TABLE 3
 PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS OF CONTROL GROUP ON PRE- AND POST-TESTS (N= 34)

Variables	Tests	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Content	Pre-	1.72	.812	.139	.485	.631*
	Post-	1.71	.785	.134		
Grammar	Pre-	1.72	.842	.144	.241	.811*
	Post-	1.71	.816	.140		
Organization	Pre-	1.66	.766	.131	.226	.823*
	Post-	1.67	.759	.130		
Vocabulary	Pre-	1.74	.856	.146	.519	.607*
	Post-	1.72	.806	.138		

*p > 0.05 level

D. Results of the Paired Sample T-Test of Students' Essay Writing Performance Experimental Group in the Pre- and Post-Tests

Table 4 depicts the mean scores of the experimental group's essay writing pre-tests in terms of content, grammar, organization, and vocabulary for, which are 1.69, 1.75, 1.66, and 1.75, respectively. On the other hand, the post-test results are 3.04, 3.09, 3.03, and 3.10, respectively. The p-values of all stated components are .000. In other words, experimental group participants brought significant difference among pre- and post-test results of essay writing. In other word, improvement was seen from pre- to post-test at $p < 0.05$ (0.000) for the stated sub-skills of writing. The findings of the test showed that TBLT contribute greatly to enhancing experimental group students' performance in writing contents, organization, using correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary.

TABLE 4
 PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP IN PRE AND POST-TESTS (N=46)

Variables	Tests	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Content	Pre-	1.69	.771	.113	-24.63	.000*
	Post-	3.04	.937	.138		
Grammar	Pre-	1.75	.827	.121	-28.16	.000*
	Post-	3.09	.915	.135		
Organization	Pre-	1.66	.743	.109	-23.57	.000*
	Post-	3.03	.941	.138		
Vocabulary	Pre-	1.75	.827	.121	-28.14	.000*
	Post-	3.10	.914	.134		

*p > 0.05 level

E. Results of the Students Interviews

The respondents of the interview pointed out that, before the treatments, they could not write essays. They told that they face problems in generating ideas on the given content, cannot able to write well organized paragraphs. They also added that they were using grammatically incorrect sentences and inappropriate words while writing. After the intervention, they can describe themselves and friends well. They also started to write paragraphs which give sense. They noted that they could produce well organized and grammatically correct compositions after intervention. In general, the students who participated in the interview indicated that TBLT helped them to produce grammatically correct and well organized sentences in their essays.

Participants of the interview told that they learnt writing skill in conventional way, giving home works and writing assignments in groups or individually. They told that no one can even try to write his/her assignment by his/her own right. Almost all students, including high achievers search from Internet with their smart phones. Others ask relatives and other educated person to write their assignment. They lack motivation to write a single meaningful and grammatically correct sentence. They told the researchers that TBLT improved their motivation and interest to write essays.

V. DISCUSSION

Recently, CLT has become fashionable way of language teaching. Researchers proved the effectiveness of CLT in language teaching (Iqbal, 2011; Marsh, 2003). However, others criticize it in various ways. For instance, Swan (1985) criticizes CLT in terms of its activity types and materials. Moreover, CLT adopts a semantic syllabus, which awards priority to meaning over structure. Thus, CLT is not effective in improving writing skills. To develop students' writing performances, confirming effective way of teaching the skill of essay writing was the main aim of this research. Therefore, this research aimed to assess the effects of TBLT on students writing content, organization, using correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary. To minimize the failure of CLT in teaching writing, TBLT is used as effective method to teach

writing. Other than CLT, TBLT concentrate on both meaning and form and persuade students to consider language learning as a purposive experience (Willis, 1996). In TBLT, the learners' attention is focused on form in the context of meaning-based instruction (Branden, 2006). In addition, learning tasks increase students' motivation to write since it provides students more freedom and a real-life context in which they can use the target language in classroom (Lam & Law, 2007; Tran, 2007). The findings of this study supported this idea. The data showed that the experimental group scored higher results on students' essay writing skills in a post-test. The results of the interview also confirmed that the intervention helped students improve their essay writing skills.

Thus, the current study accommodated listing tasks, problem solving tasks and sharing of personal information task as techniques of teaching writing. In addition, the researcher formulated and used 'reading-writing and then sharing personal information' tasks. In general, the result showed that the implementation of TBLT in writing helped the students improve their skills of writing content, organization, using correct grammar and using appropriate vocabulary. Thus, it is suggested that Secondary school English teachers apply TBLT in teaching writing skills. Other studies should be conducted to fill the research gaps with regard to whether TBLT brings significant differences to different ability groups, gender, age, etc. regarding their writing skills in terms of other macro and micro writing skills. This study did not examine these because of its delimitation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the effect of TBLT on Ethiopian students writing skills. The findings of the study indicated that the experimental group participants who took the intervention showed the most improvement in the post-test score of writing performance and increase inters to write. The study revealed that listing tasks, problem solving tasks and sharing of personal information tasks could contribute to the development of student writing performance in content, organization, grammar and vocabulary. Likewise, they also increase the students' interest and motivation since the tasks are real-life situations. Finally, this study concludes that TBLT has significant effects on improving students' essay writing skills.

APPENDIX A. PRE AND POST TESTS OF ESSAY WRITING SKILL

Wolayita Soddo University
School of Graduate Studies Directorate
Department Of English Language and Literature

Time allotted: 30 Minutes

Marks: 20

Choose one of the topics given and write a descriptive essay which consists of 150 to 250 words:

1. Describe one of your teachers
2. Describe yourself.

APPENDIX B. STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

Wolayita Soddo University
School of Graduate Studies Directorate
Department Of English Language and Literature

1. Does task-based language teaching provide you with diverse exposure to the target language that helps you write a better essay?
2. Does TBLT provide you with a relaxed atmosphere to promote the use of the target language in essay writing?
3. Did you get a sense of improvement in your essay writing after the implementation of task-based language teaching?

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