Strengths and Limitations of Task-based Language Teaching on Teaching Vocational Vocabulary in Higher Vocational College

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Abstract
Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained attraction as an effective approach for teaching vocational vocabulary in higher vocational colleges. This paper examines the strengths and limitations of TBLT in this context. TBLT's strengths lie in its student-centered methodology, which promotes meaningful interactions and student ownership through real-world tasks, enhancing motivation and language proficiency. However, limitations include the time-consuming nature of lesson preparation, high demands on teachers' abilities, and potential learner anxiety due to real-world communication pressures. To address these, strategies such as efficient task preparation, teacher professional development, and anxiety alleviation techniques are suggested. Future research should explore TBLT's long-term impact on vocabulary retention, tailored assessment strategies, and technology integration in task design. By leveraging TBLT's strengths and addressing its limitations, educators can better equip students with the vocational vocabulary needed for success in the global job market.
Keywords: TBLT, Strengths and Limitations, Vocational Vocabulary

Introduction
Vocabulary learning has an important role in communication skills and language learning development (Brooks et al., 2021). Vocabulary acquisition becomes the cornerstone of language proficiency and is essential for effective communication and academic success. However, vocational college students regularly have challenges and difficulties with vocabulary learning because of dearth of suitable teaching strategies and methods (Afzal, 2019). Higher vocational institutions use rather straightforward and traditional teaching approaches as mentioned by (Yanran & Mi, 2020). One important reason for vocational college students struggling with vocabulary learning is due to scarcity of emphasis on specific vocabulary pertinent to their prospect vocations (Song, 2023). Additionally, students encounter difficulties in vocabulary learning because they have restricted acquaintance to real-life language use in the realm of their professional backgrounds and settings (Fu, 2021; Zhang, 2011).

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a pedagogical approach designed to engage learners in meaningful, real-world tasks that promote language use in context. When compared to more conventional approaches, teachers reported that TBLT created a learning environment that was more interactive and focused on the needs of the students (Liu et al., 2021). Over the course of the last three decades, Task-based language teaching (TBL), which is a substantial pedagogical approach, has garnered a significant amount of attention (Long, 2015), and TBLT has been shown to make students more motivated and to increase their level of interaction with one another (Azizifard, 2024). Research by Huang & Gandhioke (2021) found that TBLT method is a good choice to teach vocabulary in a Chinese university. Research also shows that task-based teaching improves not only language skills, but also critical thinking and problem solving skills (Klimova, 2023). Furthermore, the collaborative nature of TBLT not only encourages critical thinking and teamwork but also prepares students for the interpersonal dynamics commonly found in workplace environments. Research indicates that students participating in TBLT show improved language proficiency and positive attitudes toward learning, attributed to the interactive and applicable nature of the tasks involved

Focusing on meaningful communication allows learners to build confidence in their language abilities and makes it easier for them to use the target language in their daily lives (Amrina et al., 2022), which makes task-based language teaching particularly attractive in English as a foreign language learning settings. Despite the popularity of TBLT, TBLT implementation varies greatly depending on educational background (Ali, 2020). In vocational education, where the goal is often to prepare students for specific professional environments, TBLT offers a practical framework for bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace demands. Series of researches investigating the effect of task-based language teaching on vocational college students' vocabulary achievement are important for customizing language instruction based on vocational college students' explicit needs and equipping them for the challenges of a world-wide job market. By emphasizing communicative competence and the application of specialized vocabulary, TBLT has gained recognition for its effectiveness in higher vocational colleges.

Many educational institutions have adopted TBLT because of its potential for the improvement of learners' engagement and language competence, especially in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Boddewyn, 2016). Even though TBLT is widely used, there are still a lot of unanswered questions, especially about how it affects language proficiency over the long run (Anya, 2021). It is challenging to determine whether TBLT offers learners long-term benefits or whether more instructional support is necessary to sustain success due to the dearth of longitudinal studies. This is a significant knowledge gap regarding the actual efficacy of TBLT.

This systematic review's main goal is to examine the studies and implementations of task-based language teaching in higher vocational college and assess the efficacy of TBLT in enhancing vocational college students' vocational vocabulary competence, encouraging student motivation, and improving language proficiency. Additionally, the assessment seeks to pinpoint the main obstacles and difficulties for higher vocational college teachers to effectively implement task-based language teaching, especially in institutional and culturally heterogeneous contexts. The review will provide useful suggestions for educators and legislators based on this analysis.

According to researches over the past ten years, there is limited data on whether speaking and listening skills improvements are maintained over time, despite the fact that many research concentrate on short-term gains (Hockly, 2023). Therefore, it is challenging to determine whether TBLT offers learners long-term benefits or whether more instructional support is necessary to sustain success due to the dearth of longitudinal studies. Another research gap lies in the difficulties of implementing TBLT in diverse cultural and educational contexts (Vyatkina, 2020). Most of the researches on task-based leaning are carried out in western cultures, while in Chinese schools including primary schools, middle schools and universities have implemented experiments on task-based leaning in teaching English, few on vocational vocabulary teaching with task-based language teaching in vocational colleges. The last gap found in the past study is few training on teachers' how to implement task-based language teaching.

Research Methodology

Only Google Scholar, ERIC, ProQuest, and other important academic databases were searched for publications as part of the literature approach for this systematic review. "Task-Based Language Teaching," "TBLT," "vocational vocabulary," "communicative competence," and "task-based learning" were among the search terms utilized. To make sure the examined studies are applicable to contemporary language teaching environments, articles published within the last 10 years were given priority. To guarantee the caliber of the research, only peer-reviewed journal articles were taken into consideration.

Reviews on assessing the effects of TBLT on language acquisition which concentrated on speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities, met the inclusion criteria. Studies included were carried out in teaching English as a foreign language contexts, at different educational levels ranging from elementary to higher education. Studies that provided information on learning outcomes were approved, regardless of whether they were qualitative or quantitative. Articles that only discussed conventional language teaching techniques and theoretical reviews devoid of empirical support were excluded. Firstly, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance to the research topic as part of the literature selection procedure. After fulfilling the inclusion requirements, articles were thoroughly examined to make sure they complemented the review's goals. Articles that failed to examine language learning outcomes or did not include empirical evidence on TBLT were disqualified. Following that, the chosen articles were grouped according to educational setting (EFL/ESL), language proficiency assessed, and educational level.

During the data gathering process, major information from each study, such as the research design, methodology, major findings, and difficulties encountered when applying TBLT in teaching English were extracted as part of the review. Then, the data was arranged in tables for comparison. The focus on certain language abilities (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) and the assessed influence on communicative competence were the criteria used to classify each study.

The method of analysis employed is thematic analysis. Key themes include task-based language teaching, vocabulary teaching, student motivation, implementation challenges to analyze the chosen publications. To find similarities and variations among various educational

situations, qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. The results of every study were combined to offer a thorough assessment of TBLT's efficacy in higher vocational college.

Result and Discussion
Benefits of Task-Based Language Teaching
TBLT Was Deemed as a 'Right' Teaching Approach
Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a powerful alternative to the traditional methods of language instruction. The difference between task-based teaching method and "teacher-centered" teaching method is that it realizes the possibility of students' integration into the classroom and transforms the previous "cramming" teaching into a teaching process of students' participation, inquiry, induction and cooperation. Under this model, students no longer passively accept and learn, and knowledge acquisition is no longer rote memorization. Changing from "passive" to "active", students participate in the learning process autonomously. When students learn with interest, the effect will be greatly strengthened, and the optimization of learning methods will be realized to the maximum extent.

Within an environment that is centred on the student, it places a significant emphasis on dialogue and the student's own internal motivation. According to research conducted by Maulana (2021), it does have the potential to effectively cultivate a variety of language skills.The fundamental strength of TBLT is its student-centered methodology, which promotes meaningful interactions and student ownership by using real-world tasks and authentic materials (Chen, 2023). Students in junior high school and college are more motivated and engaged when using this approach (Chen, 2023). According to research, TBLT can enhance students' academic performance and help them develop their language skills in a variety of educational settings (Zhou, 2021; Rosa, 2021).

TBLT Promotes Students' Motivation
Compared with traditional English teaching, opportunities are supplied for students to be active participant in applying what they have learned with the practical needs. By designing tasks related to Career scenes, teachers can stimulate their curiosity and thirst for knowledge, making them more engaged in the learning process. Students' interest and enthusiasm can be stimulated in implementing TBLT tasks. When they realize that learning English can assist them solve practical problems, their learning motivation will also be enhanced.

Research manifested that the students' motivation has been promoted by TBLT, which was mostly based on the implementation stage and the students' opinion after the implementation stage (Hima, Saputro& Farah, 2021). The teachers acknowledged that TBLT could increase their students' motivation from their students' enthusiasm in the class, and they noticed the students were engaged and enjoyed the class.

Limitations of Task-based Language Teaching
TBLT is Time-consuming to Prepare
Compared to PPP, TBLT indeed takes more time for the teachers to prepare the lesson since the implementation of TBLT often requires abundant teaching materials and conditional support. It seemed to be challenging for the teacher to make a task sequence and build the facilitating tasks based on the scaffolding concept. In some regions and schools in China, it may be difficult to effectively implement TBLT due to resource and condition limitations.

Further, each task in the task sequence should meet the six criteria of a task in TBLT which made it even more challenging for the teachers. They also reported that their other works than teaching made them less confident that they had a lot of time to design a task-based lesson.

Besides, schools may not have sufficient multimedia equipment, teaching materials, or suitable classroom environments to support TBLT activities. This may lead to a decline in teaching quality and affect the improvement of students' English proficiency. Therefore, if we want to better utilize TBLT, we must overcome these limitations, and schools and education departments need to invest more resources and support to create better conditions for the implementation of TBLT.

Challenge for Teachers' Ability in Implementing TBLT
Task-based teaching in English classes in higher vocational colleges is undoubtedly a great test for teachers' comprehensive quality and ability. Different from the teacher-centred teaching mode, in the task-based teaching mode, teachers must play multiple roles such as designer, organizer, leader, agitator, participant and evaluator, while in the teacher-cantered teaching mode, teachers must play multiple roles such as designer, organizer, leader, agitator, and evaluator. Teachers appear only as transmitters of knowledge. It is precisely because of the requirement of teachers' multiple identities that task-based teaching methods require teachers to do enough work before, during and after the whole task-based teaching activities; otherwise the effect will be counterproductive. Firstly, the task should be carefully designed to adapt to the students' cognitive ability and activate the students' learning motivation. Secondly, it is necessary to control the rhythm of classroom teaching and respond to emergencies in time to ensure the smooth development of task-based teaching activities. It is also necessary to evaluate students' performance in teaching activities. Finally, the task-based teaching activities should be summarized to provide experience support for the next activity. However, the development of this series of activities requires teachers to have high comprehensive quality and ability to control the whole process of task-based teaching activities.

TBLT Tends to Simulate Learners' Anxiety
Foreign language task performance causes high anxiety because learners are required to process inputs and produce outputs using their incomplete interlanguage system, and increased anxiety in second language task performance may adversely affect second language learning processes and outcomes (Song, 2024). The core of TBLT is "student-oriented", allowing students to "learn by doing and using." Therefore, whether to create tasks according to students' cognitive level, emotion, values, etc., is the key to highlight the effectiveness of task-based language teaching. However, it is not easy to achieve this, mainly in the process of implementing task-based language teaching, students are required to act as task roles in various communicative activities, which requires students to have specific language expression skills, and creative play in some key and difficult "tasks", which is undoubtedly "worse" for vocational college students whose English foundation is not very good and leads to different levels of anxiety.

Strategies for Effective Implementation

Here are some strategies to help manage and reduce the preparation time while still delivering effective TBLT lessons:

Time- saving Ways to Prepare Tasks

Based on the adapted textbook, relevant and authentic tasks aligning with vocational objectives and reflect real-world applications can be adapted for task-based activities to encourage students' balanced participation. Online platforms and websites that offer TBLT lesson plans with activities and materials can be modified to better suit students' needs and incorporate additional vocabulary and language points as necessary. Work with fellow language teachers to share task ideas, materials, and lesson plans. Collaborative planning sessions can help distribute the workload and provide fresh perspectives.

Professional Development and Training

Opportunities should be provided for teachers to participate in professional development workshops, conferences, or seminars focused on TBLT, so as to gain insights into best practices, and network with other educators who are implementing TBLT. Online Courses and Webinars provide a flexible way to enhance your understanding of TBLT principles and techniques. Collaborative learning with colleagues who are experienced in TBLT is not only beneficial to share ideas, discuss challenges, and learn from each other's experiences, it can also help build your confidence and improve your ability to implement TBLT effectively.

Inviting peers to observe TBLT lessons and offer constructive feedback can help identify areas to improve and gain new perspectives on the teaching practices. Seeking mentorship or coaching from experienced TBLT practitioners can offer guidance, support, and advice on implementing TBLT effectively; fostering teachers navigate challenges and build skills. Engaging in regular reflective practice promotes teachers learn from teaching experience and become more intentional in TBLT approach.

Relieving Students' Anxiety in TBLT

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can sometimes induce anxiety in learners due to its emphasis on real-world communication, group work, and performance in tasks. Before pre-task cycle, allowing students' time to strategize before task execution enhances vocabulary integration and improves language output. During task cycle, Educators should actively monitor group dynamics and implement strategies to ensure equitable participation during collaborative tasks and offer scaffolding, structured support and timely feedback to help learners integrate new vocabulary and refine their language use. TBLT teachers should provide constructive feedbacks, highlight students' progress and improvements when providing feedback, rather than just pointing out mistakes. This helps build their confidence and motivation and relieve students' anxiety.

Future Research Directions

According to the last 20 years' research, the following further researches are needed:
1. To explore the long-term impact of TBLT on vocational vocabulary retention and usage.
2. To investigate effective assessment strategies tailored to TBLT.
3. To examine the integration of technology in task design and assessment to enhance learning outcomes.

4. To address the variability in student responses to TBLT by studying diverse learner profiles and preferences.

Conclusion

This study highlights the following major findings about Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) for teaching vocational vocabulary in higher vocational colleges: through the use of real-world tasks and scenarios relevant to the workplace, TBLT not only creates a student-centered learning environment that promotes active participation, meaningful interaction, and the practical application of language skills, but it also greatly improves student motivation, engagement, and language proficiency. Last but not least, TBLT fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork—all of which are essential for success in the workplace—as well as language proficiency. Preparing TBLT lessons is time-intensive, requiring well-structured tasks and substantial resources. The approach demands a high level of teacher expertise to design, implement, and evaluate tasks effectively. Learners, particularly those with weak language foundations, may experience anxiety during task performance, potentially hindering their learning process.

In order to optimize the advantages of TBLT and tackle its obstacles, the subsequent actions are suggested: First and foremost, the most important prerequisite for TBLT implementation is institutional support. Multimedia tools and other instructional resources that are required to support the use of TBLT are required. In order to facilitate more individualized education and efficient work management, smaller class sizes ought to be implemented. Secondly, there is a need to improve the professional development of instructors. It is anticipated that regular workshops and training sessions will be held with an emphasis on task design, classroom management techniques, and TBLT principles. To foster confidence and knowledge sharing among colleagues, support cooperative teaching methods and mentorship. Simplifying the preparatory process is crucial for the educational impact. To save time, educators should establish a shared repository of task-based lesson plans or use pre-made, flexible activities from reputable online platforms. For duties to be relevant and applicable, closely match them with career goals. Thirdly, to reduce learners' anxiety, tasks that match students' cognitive and linguistic levels should be while gradually increasing complexity to build confidence. Teachers should offer structured scaffolding and constructive feedback to create a supportive learning environment.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of TBLT on vocabulary retention, the integration of technology in task design, and strategies for assessing task-based learning outcomes. By addressing these aspects, educators and policymakers can better harness the potential of TBLT to equip vocational college students with the vocabulary and skills needed for global career success.

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